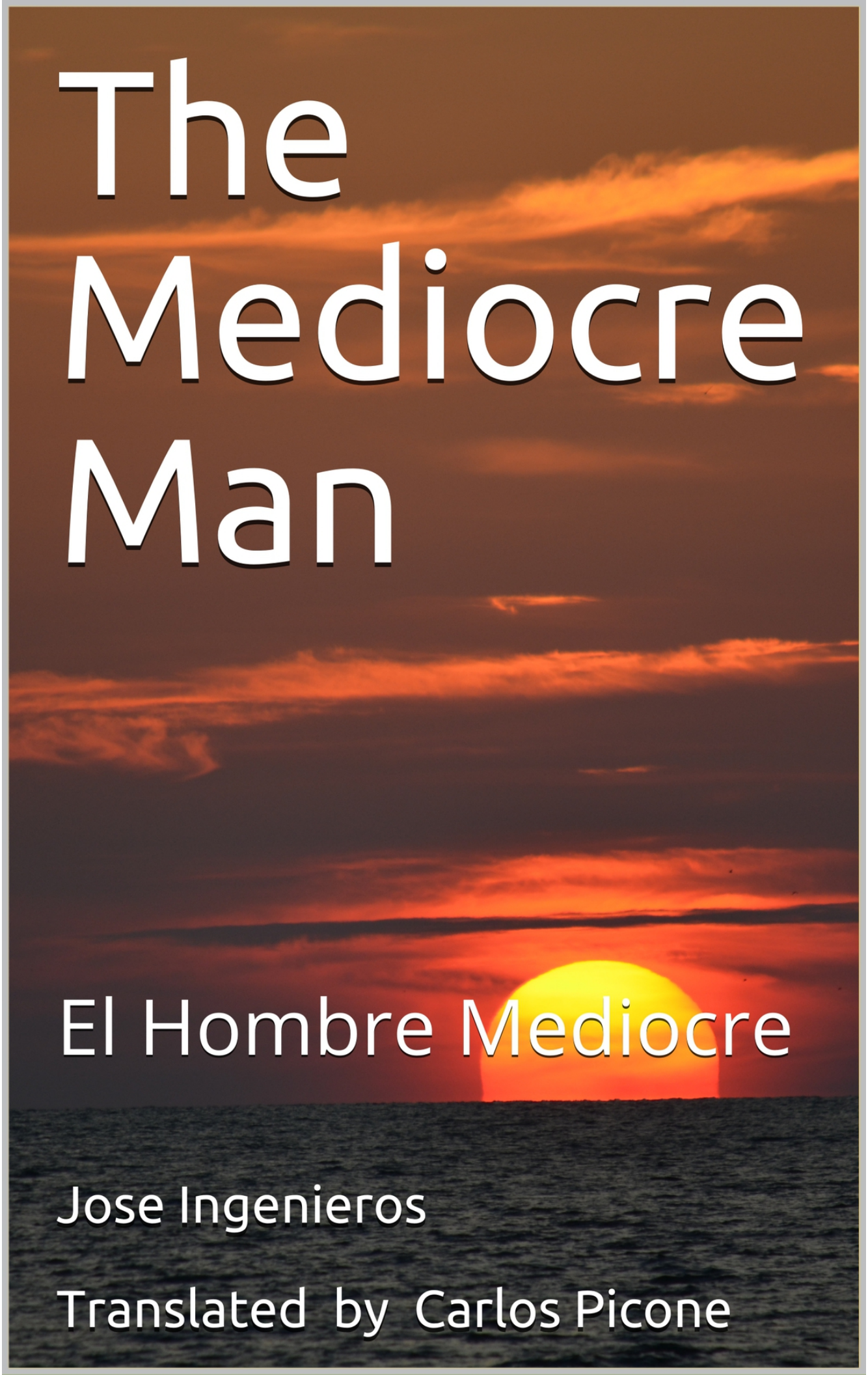
The Mediocre Man
El Hombre Mediocre
Jose Ingenieros
Translated by Carlos Picone

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Jose Ingenieros

1913

Tranlated by Carlos E. Picone

Idealists are qualitative men, able to distinguish between the bad they observe from the better they imagine. The mediocre men without ideals are quantitative, appreciating more from less but not better from worse. Jose Ingenieros here deeply analyzes the human nature, society and its morals. The Mediocre Man is considered one of the cornerstones of Latin American philosophical and social thought of the early 20th century.

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Dedication

Dedicated to Franco, Lucas and Sofia hoping they will thrive through their adolescence and fully embrace Ingenieros' principles and be guided towards the higher intellectual and spiritual life driven by ideals and idealism, realizing that the journey of discovery is not simple but will provide deep and lofty pleasures. And to Daniela, my wife of 25 years, for her understanding, her tolerance, her unconditional love and unwavering support demonstrating many of the virtues praised by Ingenieros through his short life and his five books, including his Love Treatise.

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Prologue

The book that made the most powerful impact during my adolescence was “El Hombre Mediocre” (The Mediocre Man), Jose Ingenieros’ most important work. I read it when I was 17 years old, growing up in my Argentina’s Pampas. Upon its completion, and motivated to drink all I could from his rich fountain, I found his published works and made quick progress with all of them as you may as well, once you devour his first page.

Jose Ingenieros was born Giuseppe Ingegneri, in Palermo, Italy, on April 24, 1877. He and his family immigrated to Argentina in the late 1880’s. His family was a modest Italian immigrant family and his father worked as a librarian. Jose spent his early years in his father’s library, where he developed his love for books and reading.

Jose Ingenieros grew up in Argentina, where he graduated as a physician from the University of Buenos Aires in 1900. He later became a psychiatrist but his deep love for literature kept him active in intellectual endeavors throughout his short life. He was philosophically most influenced by Herbert Spencer, Ralph Waldo Emerson and Auguste Comte. He became an active positivist philosopher, embracing effort and education as the pillars of human development and achievement. His philosophy was akin to Ayn Rand’s, but he wrote this book in 1913 when Ms. Rand was just 8 years-old and decades before The Fountainhead and Atlas Shrugged were published, motivating so many in college campuses throughout the United States over the past seven decades.

He wrote about the human condition, society and the motivations behind human behavior. The mediocre man is that quantitative man, able to understand more from less but not the best from the worse. The Idealist is a qualitative man who distinguishes the bad he observes from the better he imagines.

Ingenieros was active in his medical profession and in literary circles. He founded the Buenos Aires Institute of Criminology in 1907 and the Argentine Psychological Society in 1908; he was elected President of the Argentine Medical Association in 1909.

He married Eva Rutenberg, from Lausanne, in 1914. Appointed Assistant Dean of the School of Philosophy and Letters of his alma mater, he played a prominent role in the landmark Argentine University reform of 1918. He resigned his academic posts in 1919 to join *Claridad*, a socialist organization and in 1922, formed *Unión Latinoamerica*, a political action committee focused on anti-imperialism. He was an active Freemason since 1898. He founded a monthly, *Renovación*, in 1925, but died in Buenos Aires later that year from severe pneumonia.

After reading Ingenieros, reviewing his concepts of idealism and his merciless flogging of mediocrity, I could no longer sit idle in my free time. It forced me to observe human behavior under a different glass and light, and while we continue to be complex creatures difficult to throw into boxes and impossible to paint with a broad brush, it has provided motivation and opened my eyes to geniuses of creation, saints and heroes alike. It has helped me look for answers to understand our Universe and my place within it. It has reaffirmed the role of reason and observation in that quest and reduced the importance of dogma. His most important philosophical and social work is translated here for your enjoyment. At a time when human attention is under attack by so many distracting stimuli and influences, I hope this short book will motivate new generations of adolescents to emulate Jose Ingenieros and the eternal values he discussed and promoted.

Introduction

The Idealist's Moral

I- THE EXCITEMENT OF AN IDEAL

When your visionary bow aims towards the stars and you unfold your wings towards such unreachable loftiness, eager of perfection and rebellious to mediocrity, you carry deep within, the mysterious spring of an Ideal. It is a sacred ember, capable of annealing you for great deeds. Guard it! If extinguished, it will not re-ignite. And if it dies, you are left inert; cold human rubbish. You only live for that particle of fantasy that lifts you beyond reality. It is the feather of your blazon, the crest of your temperament. Innumerable signs reveal its presence: When your throat tightens remembering the hemlock imposed on Socrates, the cross raised for Christ and the bonfire ignited for Bruno; when you dream unbounded reading Plato's dialogues, Montaigne's essays or Helvetius discourses; when your heart trembles thinking of the unequal fortune of those passions in which you were Juliet's Romeo and Carlotta's Werther; when your temples freeze with emotion declaring a verse by Musset that rhymes according to your feelings and when, in sum, you admire the clear mind of genius, the sublime virtue of saints, the great quest of heroes, leaning with equal veneration before the creators of Truth and Beauty.

Few are enraptured by a crepuscule, or dream with an aurora or vibrate with a tempest. Or like to walk with Dante, laugh with Moliere, tremble with Shakespeare, rattle with Wagner or are muted by the David, the Last Supper or the Parthenon. That restlessness to avidly pursue some chimera belongs to a select few, revering philosophers, artists, and thinkers that fused in supreme synthesis their visions of humanity and eternity, flying beyond reality. Those of your stock, whose imagination is populated by ideals and whose feelings polarize their full personae towards those ideals are distinct and separate from Humanity: They are Idealists.

Defining their own emotion, the poet would say: Ideal is a spiritual gesture towards some perfection.

II- IDEALISM FOUNDED ON EXPERIENCE

The philosophers of the future, to approximate less inaccurate forms of expression, will leave the beautiful privilege of figurative language to the poets and the future systems, abandoning old mystic and dialectic residues, will embrace Experience as the fundament of all legitimate Hypothesis.

It is not improbable to think that in the ethics of the future, *Moral Idealism* will bloom, independent of religious and metaphysical dogmas: The Ideals of perfection, founded on social experience and evolving as experience itself, will provide the masonry structure of a doctrine of indefinite perfectibility, conducive towards all the possibilities of human betterment.

An ideal is not a dead formula, but a perfectible hypothesis; for an ideal to be helpful, it must be conceived working towards a constant social evolution. The imagination, based on experience, anticipates future improvements; the ideals, among all beliefs, represent the highest intellectual achievement.

Human evolution is a continuous struggle of adaptation to nature. Man needs to know his environment to foresee the direction of adaptations, the pathways leading to his perfection. Its stages are reflected in the human mind as ideals. Men, group or race are idealists because the proper circumstances promote their imagination to conceive possible improvements.

The Ideals are natural developments and appear when the right circumstances promote a high intellectual platform such that the imagination anticipates experiences. These are not entities mysteriously injected in men, nor are they born by chance. They evolve as all phenomena accessible to our observation. The result of causes, accidents in the universal evolution researched by science and summarized by philosophies. And it is easy to explain: Our solar system is a speck in the Cosmos; in that speck, our planet is but a simple detail; in that detail, life is a transient chemical equilibrium on its surface; among the complications of that living

equilibrium, humanity's presence is a newcomer. The human intellectual function evolves as a perfecting adaptation to the environment; one of its means is Imagination, which allows the generalization of data obtained by experience, anticipating possible results and abstracting from it Ideals of Perfection. Thus, the philosophy of the future instead of negating them, will confirm their existence as legitimate aspects of intellectual function integrating those Ideals of Perfection into the natural conception of the Universe. An ideal is a place and pause between the possible infinites that exist in space and time.

Evolution is change. In human's evolution, thought changes constantly. All variation is acquired by ready temperaments. Useful variations tend to persist. Experience determines the natural formation of generic concepts and the imagination abstracts from them common features, hammering out general ideas that become hypothesis about the constant evolution: Ideals develop which determine human behavior in agreement with those hypotheses. Ideals are induced by vast experience. Imagination relies on this deep well to anticipate humanity's progress. An ideal represents a new equilibrium between past and future.

Ideals occasionally are not truths. They are beliefs. Their strength is their emotion: they impact our conduct in as much as we believe them. Therefore, the abstract representation of future variations has a moral value. The most beneficial to the species are considered perfecting. Future identifies perfection. Ideals, since they are anticipated visions of the future, influence our behavior and become the natural instrument of all human progress.

Whereas instruction is limited to extending our knowledge based on experience, education suggests ideals to achieve perfecting results in the quest to perfection.

The concept of betterment is the natural result of evolution itself. Life naturally tends to perfect itself. Aristotle taught that activity is the movement of being towards his own "entelechy": its state of perfection. All that exists pursues its "entelechy" and this tendency is reflected in the other functions of the spirit. The formation of ideals is dependent on a complex and absolute determinism. They are not free from universal laws, or the result of unknown reason. They are approximating beliefs about looming

perfection. The future is the best of the present since it is what appears and survives in the natural selection. Ideals are a vector towards that which is best, becoming anticipations of the future.

As human experience and observation expand, ideals are modified by the imagination, which is plastic and restless. Experience and imagination continue parallel routes, although experience is slower. Hypothesis flies. Facts crawl. Sometimes those wings fly adrift. Feet step on firm ground. The flight can be corrected, but steps will never fly.

Imagination is the mother of all originality, molding reality towards its perfection. She creates the ideals and drives them with a delusive sentiment of freedom; free will is a useful mistake in the gestation of ideals. For this reason, it practically has the value of a reality. To demonstrate that it is a simple illusion due to ignorance of innumerable causes does not negate its efficacy. Illusions have as much value to drive behavior as the most absolute truths; and they can be even more energizing if they are intensively thought or felt. The wish to be free is born from the contrast of two irreducible motivations: one driven by heritage, persevering in the human soul and the other augmenting that soul and suggesting a variation. One is principle of Stability, the other of Progress.

In all ideals, there are principles of synthesis and continuity: “it is a fixed idea or a fixed emotion”. As propellers of human activity, they are reciprocally bound. Reasoning prevails in the former and passion in the latter. “That principle of unity, attraction center and supporting point of all creative imagination, in other words, of a subjective synthesis that tends to objectify itself: that is the ideal”, as per Ribot. Imagination divests reality of all ills and adorns it with virtue, purifying experience and crystallizing it in the molds of the perfection conceived as most pure. Ideals are, therefore, imaginative reconstructions of reality.

Ideals are always unique. A collective ideal is the coincidence of several individuals with the same eagerness of progress and perfection. The idea does not make them homogenous, rather analogous feelings and thoughts converge towards an “ideal” common to all of them. Each era, century or generation may have its ideal; it frequently belongs to a select minority, whose effort succeeds in imposing it to future generations. Each ideal may incarnate itself in a genius; at the beginning, as he defines or

realizes it, understood only by a small group of sensible souls in rhythm with the new beliefs.

The abstract concept of a possible perfection, gathers its strength from the Truth that men bestow on it: An ideal is faith in the very possibility of perfection. Its involuntary protest against the wicked reveals a resilient hope of betterment and in its aggression towards the past healthy yeast of progress ferment.

It is not a goal, rather a path. It is always relative, as all beliefs. The intensity with which it tends to its realization depends not on its effective truth, but rather the attributed reality. Even if erroneously interpreted, future perfection is an ideal to whoever sincerely believes in its veracity or loftiness.

Reducing idealism to a metaphysical school's dogma is equivalent to castration; calling idealism the fantasies of sickly and ignorant minds, believing they can sublimate their incapacity for life and illustration. This is one of the farces harbored by weak spirits. The most vulgar philosophic dictionaries suspect this deliberate confusion: "Idealism: vague word that should not be used without explanation".

There are as many idealisms as ideals and as many ideals as idealists; and idealists as able men to conceive perfections and able to live towards them. We must refuse the ideals' monopoly and those who claim them in the name of philosophic schools, moral systems, creeds of religion or esthetic dogma.

"Idealism" is not a privilege of spiritualistic doctrines that would want to oppose it to "materialism", naming thus, contemptuously, all others; that mistake, exploited by the enemies of the Sciences – justly held as symbols of Truth and Liberty -, is duplicated suggesting that matter is the antithesis of concept and ideas, after confusing ideals with ideas and this with spirit, as transcendent entity and foreign to the real world. It is, obviously, wordplay, secularly repeated by its beneficiaries, endowing the philosophic doctrines of idealism and materialism in the moral order. The yearning for perfection in the knowledge of Truth may stimulate with similar strength the monist philosopher and the dualist; the theologist and the atheist, the stoic and the pragmatist. Each particular ideal concurs at the rhythm of possible perfections.

The tendency for some to confuse idealism as it refers to ideals with the metaphysical tendencies is even more likely, because they consider "ideas" more real than reality itself, or presuppose that they are the only reality, forged by our mind, as in the Hegelian system. "Ideologist" cannot be a synonym with "idealist" even if improper semantics lead to believe it.

We could not restrict this alleged idealism of certain esthetic schools, because all forms of naturalism and realism may constitute an ideal of art when their deacons are Miguel Angel, Titian, Flaubert or Wagner; the imaginative effort of those who pursue an ideal harmony of rhythms, of colors, of lines or sounds. Equivalent all as they display beauty or original personality.

We will not confuse it with the ethical idealism that tends to monopolize the cult for perfection in favor of some of the age predominating religious fanaticisms, since there is no unique and inevitable Ideal, it would barely fit catechisms for obtuse minds. The individual effort towards virtue can be magnificently conceived and realized by the Peri-pathetic or the Cyrenaic, by the Cristian or the Anarchist, by the Philanthropist or the Epicurean, since all philosophic theories are equally compatible with the aspiration towards human perfection. They all can be idealists, if they know how to illuminate their doctrine and all doctrines can shelter deserving men and peddlers, virtuous and miscreants. The desire and possibility of perfection are no birthrights of creeds: It reminds the water of that fountain cited by Plato that could not be contained in vases.

Only experience, decides over the legitimacy of the ideals of time and place. Over the course of social life, they are naturally selected; those most adapted who anticipate the sense of evolution, survive. As experience does not provide the final verdict, all ideal is respectable, even if it appears absurd. It is useful for its contrast force; if it is false, it dies. Ideals, since they are beliefs, may contain a mistaken part, or be a complete error; is a remote vision and therefore inexact. The only tragedy is to lack ideals and enslave oneself to the contingencies of the immediate practical life, abandoning the possibility of moral perfection.

When a philosopher enunciates ideals for men or society, his immediate understanding becomes more difficult as it soars over the prejudices and conventional dialogue; same thing happens with the wizard's

Truth and the style of the poet. Other's sanction is easy if it matches routines secularly practiced; difficult when imagination does not emphasize originality in concept or form.

This imbalance between conceivable perfection and practicable reality lies in the nature of imagination, rebellious to time and space. This legitimate contrast, does not imply that logical ideals, esthetic or moral, must be contradictory with each other, even if heterogeneous and beating at differing rhythms, according to the times: there is no amoral or ugly Truth, nor Beauty was ever absurd or harmful, nor was Good rooted in error or disharmony. Otherwise, we would conceive imperfect perfections.

The roads leading to perfection are convergent. The infinite forms of the Ideal are complementary: never contradictory, even if they appear to be. The ideal of science is Truth; of morality is Good and that of the Arts, Beauty. All are preeminent forms of loftiness. They are never contradictory.

Ideals are in constant evolution, as the forms of reality they anticipate. Imagination builds them observing nature, result of experience. Once formed, they are not in that reality but anticipating it, living above it and marking the future. And when reality evolves towards a predicted ideal, the imagination jumps ahead proportionally. Reality can never match the chimera in that perpetual pursuance of dreams. Ideal is a limit: reality is a "variable dimension" that can approximate the ideal indefinitely, but never reach it.

All ideal is always relative to an imperfect reality. They are not absolutes. Otherwise, we would negate the infinite possibility of perfection. Old moralists mistakenly believed that space and time converged in their spirit. Modern Ethics is free of this mistake. The relativity of ideals is a fundamental tenet. A common feature is their permanent transformation towards limitless human improvement.

A Moral based on dogma and superstitions belongs to primitive humans. And goes against all Idealism. In each place and moment, reality changes; with this variation also changes the reference point of ideals. They are born and they die. They converge, are excluded, agonize or are emphasized; they are, living creatures as the brains in which they germinate or take hold, in an endless process. There is no final and insurmountable

scheme of perfection and the same is true of human ideals. They form due to incessant change, constant and eternal evolution.

This evolution of ideals does not follow a uniform rhythm over the course of social or individual life. There are moral climates, times, moments in which a race, peoples, a class, a party, a sect, conceive an ideal and strain to achieve it. And the same occurs in the evolution of each human.

There are also moments and times in which ideals are barely audible or muted: reality offers immediate satisfaction of appetites and the temptation of becoming sated chokes all desire of perfection.

Each age has certain ideals that better presage the future, anticipated by few, followed by the people or drowned by their indifference. At times, those few are predestined to guide people as the magnetic poles and at other times remain silent and latent until able to find glory when the time and climate are just right. And other ideals die, because they are false beliefs; illusions that man forges about himself and that ignorant follow slapping and smacking shadows.

Without ideals, human betterment would be impossible. They have and always will be there. They palpitate behind all magnificent human endeavors. The imagination ignites them surpassing experience and anticipating its results. That is the law of human progress and evolution: Events receive life and heat from the ideals, without whose influence they would be inert and centuries would be muted. Events are departure points; ideals are beacons of light that illuminate the path ahead. The history of civilization demonstrates an infinite search for perfection that great souls foretell, announce or symbolize. Facing those Heralds, in each moment of the human pilgrimage, there is a force that obstructs all progress: Mediocrity, which is the incapacity to conceive Ideals.

Thus conceived, it becomes convenient to integrate idealism into any future scientific philosophy. Perhaps it may seem foreign and strange to those who use words without defining their meaning and to those who fear complicating themselves in logomachies of verbalists. Defined with clarity and separated from its secular undergrowth, it will always be the privilege of those humans who grace, with their virtues, the human species. As doctrine of perfectibility, superior to all dogmatic affirmation, Idealism will win. Distorted by myopics and fanatics, it is reduced. Those watching the

past and advancing their bow towards dead prejudices are mistaken. Ideals live from the Truth, which is dynamic and progressive. It is blindness to oppose imagination of the future to the experience of the present, the Ideal to the Truth, as if it were convenient to turn off the lights to avoid missing the destination. False; imagination and experience go hand in hand. Alone, they stall.

To the dogmatic idealism of the old metaphysics we oppose an experimental idealism based on the ideals of perfection, incessantly renewed, plastic and evolving as life itself.

III- THE IDEALISTIC TEMPERAMENTS

Dante could not elevate Gil Blas, Sancho and Tartuffe to the corner of his paradise populated by Cyrano, Don Quixote, and Stockman. They are two moral worlds, two races, two temperaments: Shadows and Men. Unequal men cannot think alike. There will always be evident contrast between servitude and dignity, obtuseness and ingenuity, hypocrisy and virtue. The imagination will thrust some towards perfection; while imitation will organize in others the collective habits. There will always be Idealists and Mediocre men.

Human improvement is attained with diverse rhythm in societies and individuals. Most possess experience obedient to the past: routines, prejudices, domesticities. Few selected ones push forward to the future, focusing their pupils in distant constellations that appear inaccessible. Those men, destined to emancipate themselves from their herd, searching perfection beyond the present, are the “Idealists”. The unity of genre does not depend on the intrinsic content of their ideals, but of their temperament: Idealists pursue the most contradictory dreams, as long as they imply a sincere and lofty desire of progress. Spirits stimulated by ideals are adversaries of mediocrity: they are dreamers versus utilitarians, enthusiasts versus apathetics, generous against calculating men, anarchists versus dogmatics. An Idealist is a qualitative man: Possessing a sense of difference that allows him to distinguish between the bad he observes and the better he imagines. Men without ideals are quantitative; they can appreciate the more and the minus, but they can never distinguish the best from the worse.

Without ideals, progress would be inconceivable. The cult of the "practical man", limited to present contingencies renounces imperfection. Habits organize routine and do not create towards the future; only from imaginative men science awaits new hypothesis, art its flight, moral its examples, History its illuminated pages. They are the part of Humanity that is alive and dynamic: the practical one has taken advantage of their effort, ruminating in their shadow. All progress has been a creation of those able to anticipate it, accomplishing infinite succession of ideals. More has achieved the restless imagination than the destructive calculus. The excessive prudence of mediocrity has paralyzed the most promising initiatives. It does not mean that imagination excludes experience: the latter is useful, but without the former, it is sterile. Idealists aspire to conjure in their mind inspiration and wisdom; that's why they frequently live blocked by their critical spirit, or when a lyrical emotion clouds their observation of reality. From the harmony between inspiration and wisdom, genius is born. In those great chances for a race or a man, inspiration is essential to create; that spark ignites the imagination and experience transforms it in bonfire. All idealism is pursuit of intense culture: its most ardent enemy is ignorance, mother of obstinate routines.

Humanity does not reach the idealists' horizon, but always beyond where it would have stalled without their effort. The little they all achieve depends on that greatness that few desire. Humanity would not have its present goods and comforts if few idealists had not conquered them, living with the obsessive aspiration and inspiration of improvement.

In human evolution, ideals maintain an unstable equilibrium. All real improvement is preceded by sometimes hesitant steps forward by bold thinkers, in tension towards progress, rebellious to the past but without the necessary intensity to violate it. Idealists are necessarily restless, as all that is alive; against the peaceful tendencies of the routine men. That restlessness is exacerbated in great humans, in geniuses if the environment is hostile to their chimeras. It does not agitate men without ideals, mediocre humanity.

All youth is restless. It has the impulse towards improvement and betterment of society: never from the senile and old. Youth only applies to the healthy and illuminated, the one who gazes at the mirror and not to the back. Never the young decrepit, domesticated prematurely by past

superstitions: what appears spring is lukewarm autumn, the illusion of aurora that dims the sunset. There is youth, only in those who work enthusiastically for the future. It is for this reason that in excellent characters "youth" can persist beyond the graying years. We expect nothing from those who enter life without becoming feverish for some ideal; those who have never been young have never found dreams. We are not born "young". We must acquire youth through an Ideal.

Idealists tend to be rebels and steer clear of social dogma that constricts them. They resist the tyranny of the leveling cogwheels, abhor all coercion, feel the weight of the honors with which society intends to tame and make them accomplices of vested interests, docile, malleable and uniform in the common mediocrity. Conservative forces that form the social strata pretend to amalgamate individuals, decapitating them; they detest differences, loathe exceptions and anathematize those who alone search their own personality. The original, the imaginative, the creator does not shirk away from confrontation nor is afraid of their hatred: challenges them, even when aware of their irresponsibility. It is for this reason that an Idealist is a living affirmation of Individualism, even when in pursuit of a social chimera; He can live for others but never from others. His independence is a hostile reaction to all dogmatisms. Perfectible and improvable, idealistic temperaments want to always declare, as Don Quixote: "I know who I am". They live animated by that affirmative toll. They pin their supreme joy and perpetual misery in their ideals. In them they forge their passion which feeds their faith; and this, when crushing against social reality, may seem contempt, isolation, misanthropy; the classic "Ivory Tower" reproached to those who avoid befriending the obtuse. We could dare say that Theresa de Avila left an eternal image of them: "silkworms we are, little worms who spin the silk from our lives and in that cocoon, we shut off to the world, such that while the silkworm dies, a butterfly will fly off".

All Idealism is exaggerated and it needs to be. And its language must be warm, with its personality overflowing the impersonal; thoughts without warmth are dead, cold and without style; impersonal. Geniuses, saints and heroes have never been lukewarm. To create a particle of Truth, Virtue or Beauty, an original and violent effort against some routine or prejudice is required; to give a lesson of dignity, servility and subservience must be destroyed. All idealism is, instinctively, extreme; and knowingly, it must be,

as it risks degrading itself mirroring the mediocrity of the rest. Compared to the hypocrites who lie with vile objectives, the exaggeration of Idealists is barely, a passionate truth. Passion is its necessary property, even when it may seem to deviate from the truth; it leads to hyperbole, to possible errors, but never to lies or deceit. Ideals are never false for those who harbor them: Idealists believe them true and cooperate to their realization, with faith and honesty. Wise men search Truth for the pleasure of its search and enjoy plucking off secrets from Nature, even if useless or dangerous. Artists do too, because beauty is Truth animated by the imagination, more than by experience. And the moralist pursues it in Goodness that is the straight loyalty of behavior for himself and for those around him. Having an ideal is serving Truth. Always!

Some ideals are revealed as belligerent passion and others as persistent obsession; two types of idealists are recognized. Does the Heart or the Brain prevail? Sentimental idealism is romantic: imagination is not inhibited by criticism and ideals thrive from their feelings. In experimental idealism, emotional rhythms are channeled by experience and criticism coordinates the imagination: ideals become reflexive and serene. One belongs to Youth and the other to Maturity. The former is adolescent, grows, thrusts and tussles. The latter is adult, settles, resists and wins.

The perfect idealist would be a romantic at 20 and a stoic at 50; it is so abnormal stoicism in youth as romanticism in maturity. That which ignites his passion, must become crystallized later in supreme dignity: this is the logic of his temperament.

IV- THE ROMANTIC IDEALISM

Romantic Idealists are exaggerated because they are insatiable. Dream more and accomplish less; understand that all ideals contain a particle of utopia and that they lose something when accomplished: Of peoples or individuals they are never achieved as thought out. In very few things may man attain the Ideal that his imagination points out: his glory is to march towards it, always unreached and unreachable. After Goethe illuminated his spirit with all the resplendence of human culture, he dies begging for more light; and Musset wants to love incessantly after loving throughout his life, offering his life for a tender pat and his genius for a loving kiss. All

Romantics seem to wonder, along with the Poet: “Why is Human Desire endless but not Human power?” They have the curiosity of a thousand eyes, always alert to avoid losing the most imperceptible titillation of the world soliciting it. Their sensitivity is acute, plural, stubborn and creative. As if the neural terminals would have multiplied their impressionability. Their gesture promptly follows their natural tendencies: among ten options, they adopt the one chosen by the most intense beating of their heart. They are Dionysians. Their aspirations are manifested by active efforts over the social fabric, or by hostility against all that opposes the pursuits of their souls and dreams. They build their Ideals without granting anything to reality, refusing to accept the balancing power of experience, attacking it if against their hunch and fantasies. They are naïve and sensitive, easily moved, accessible to enthusiasm and tenderness; with that naivety and simplicity without duplicity that practical men ignore. One minute suffices them to decide their lives. Their Ideal crystallizes with unequivocal firmness when reality hurts them even more.

Every Romantic is for Don Quixote and against Sancho, for Cyrano against Tartuffe, for Stockman against Gil Blas: for any ideal against all mediocrity. Every Romantic prefers flowers before fruits, anticipating that this one could never exist without the former. The practical temperaments know that life guided by interest offers material gains; Romantics believe that supreme dignity incubates in reverie and passion. For them, a kiss of their chosen woman is worth all the treasures.

Their eloquence is in their heart: they are gifted with “the reasons that reason ignores”, as Pascal used to say. In them is based the irresistible spell of the Mussets and Byrons: their passion thrills, chokes as a tight grip around our necks, wetting our eyelids and shortening our breath. Their heroines and protagonists populate juvenile sleepless nights, as if described by a magic wand dipped in the chalice of a Greek priestess: Sappho, the most lyric. Styles of light and color, always lively and fervent. Passionate temperaments write as they speak, with that eloquence belonging to voices hoarse by desire or excess, that warm voice that enraptures fine women and makes a Don Juan of each and every Romantic Lover. They are Love’s aristocrats, with them all Juliet and Isolde dream. In vain mundane hypocrisies confabulate against them; boorish spirits would wish to invent a

scale to weigh their immediate utility. Since they don't have them, they renounce and can't follow.

Men incapable of feeling noble passions ,–avoid Love as if it were an abyss and are unaware that love refines all virtues and is the most effective of moralists. They live and die without having learned to love. They belittle the sentiment of love, guided by sordid convenience. Others choose for them their lovers and later select even their spouses. They are neither worried about their fidelity if they serve as adornments, nor they demand intelligence if it is a climbing step in their world. Musset impresses them as too light, Byron infernal; GeorgeSand and Theresa de Avila, exaggerated. They cross themselves if somebody suspects that Christ may have loved Magdalena the sinner. Firmly believe that Werther, Joselyn, Mimi, Rolla and Manon are symbols of evil, created by the imagination of sickly artists. They abhor the deeply felt passion, detest sentimental romanticisms. Prefer the tranquil purchase to the compromising conquest. They ignore the supreme virtues of Love, that is longing, yearning, dreaming, danger, all imagination converging towards the betterment of the instinct and not simple brutal vertigo of the senses.

In times of decadence, when mediocrity rules, idealists line up against social dogmas regardless of the dominant regime. Sometimes, in the name of political romanticism, they agitate a democratic and human ideal. Their love for all who suffer is just rancor against those who oppress their own individuality. We could say that they even love the victims, to protest against the unfit executioner; always remaining outside all flocks, knowing that the mass is a poor recipe for the future.

All perfectible tasks are imbued of Romanticism; the orientation changes over time. There are times in which they bloom, as in the reactionary hours that followed the trembling liberties of the French Revolution. Some Romantics believe themselves to be providential, and their imagination is revealed by a constructive mysticism, as in Fourier and Lamennais, preceded by Rousseau, who was a Calvinist Marxist, and followed by Karl Marx, who was a Jewish Rousseau. In others, such as Byron and Ruskin it becomes static religion. In Mazzini and Kossouth it takes political hues. Speaks in prophetic tones and transcends through Lamartine and Hugo. In Stendhal, warns with irony the social dogmatism and in Vigny spurns them bitterly. Hurts with Musset and despairs with

Amiel. Castigates mediocrity with Flaubert and Barbey d'Aurevilly. And in others, becomes an open rebellion against all that belittles and tames the individual, such as in Emerson, Stirner, Guyau, Ibsen or Nietzsche.

V- THE STOICS' IDEALISM

Romantic revolts are blunted by the experience; which bridles false impetuosities and endows ideals with more soundness. Reality's lessons do not kill the idealist: they educate him. His eagerness of perfection becomes more centripetal and dignified, pursues proper paths, learning to protect itself from the ambush set up by mediocrity. When those forces surpass his personal strength and the social dogma block his efforts to straighten them, his idealism becomes experimental. He cannot change the reality of his ideals, but he finds a way to defend them, attempting to safeguard them from all belittlement and debasement. What used to be projected outwards becomes polarized in that effort and internalized. "A great life" – wrote Vigny – "is a youth's ideal realized at mature age." Imposing his dreams is inherent to that first illusion, breaking reality's barriers; when the experience notices great difficulties, idealists protect themselves in intrinsic virtues, guarding their ideals and realizing them in some measure, without allowing troubling complicity or staining. Sentimental and romantic idealism becomes experimental and stoic; experience regulates the imagination making it reflexive. The serene classic harmony replaces the impetuous thrust: Dionysian Idealism becomes Apollonian Idealism (chaotic creativity is replaced by intellectual order).

This is only natural. Romanticisms do not resist critical experience; if they survive beyond youth's limits, their fervor is not equivalent to their efficiency. It was Cervantes' error to conceive an old Don Quixote journeying on in pursuit of his dreams. It is a lot more logical Don Juan, marrying at Christ's age; the characters that Murger created in his bohemian life stop in that limbo of mature life. It could not be different. The accumulation of contrasts finally coordinates the imagination, guiding but not debasing it.

And if the idealist is a superior mind, his ideal takes on definitive forms: Transforms Truth, Beauty or Virtue into more permanent forms. Time approves this exemplary effort. Posterity judges it Classic. Classicism

proceeds from a natural selection between ideals that once upon a time were romantic and which survived centuries.

Few dreamers find such climate and opportunity to be anointed into geniality. Most are exotic and untimely; events whose determinism they can't modify, sterilize their efforts. This explains the acquiescence to things that do not depend on merit and self-effort, tolerance to all undeviating fatality. Feeling external pressure they neither cringe nor crawl; they step aside finding refuge in themselves and climbing on the shore from which they observe the muddy and murmuring creek running down without shouts or exclamation. They are the judges of their time: they observe the avalanche. They discover the ones dimmed by mud, the ones pursuing false recognition which clashes with merit and justice.

The stoic idealist remains hostile to his environment, just as the Romantic idealist. His attitude is that of open resistance to organized mediocrity, scornful resignation or proud revoke, without compromises. He does not care if he must offend evil, consented by others; He must be free to accomplish a perfection that only depends on his own effort. Acquires an "individualist sensitivity" that is not ordinary selfishness or disinterest for the ideals that agitate his society. The differences between doctrinarian individualism and individualist sentiment are stark; one is theory but the other is attitude. In Spencer, the individualist doctrine is escorted by social sensibility; in Bakunin the social doctrine coexists with an individualist sensibility. It's a matter of temperament and not ideas; which is the basis of character. All individualism, as an attitude, is a rebellion against dogmas and the false values respected by mediocracies; revealing energies willing to be spread out, contained by a thousand obstacles opposed by the gregarious spirit. The individualist temperament rejects the principle of authority, ignores prejudices, spurns impositions, disdains hierarchies independent of merit. Parties, sects or denominations are all indifferent if unable to discover in them ideals consonant with his. He believes in firm virtues of men, more than in the written falsehood of theoretical principles; while not reflected in their manners, the best paper laws do not modify the stupidity of those who admire them or the suffering of the ones tolerating them.

The ethic of the stoic idealist differs radically from those sordid individualisms that recruit the sympathies of egotists. Two morals

essentially distinct can originate from self-assessment and criticism. The worthy chooses the lofty one, that of Zeno or Epicurus. The mediocre opts always for the lower one and meets Aristippus. The former finds refuge within, growing in the process; the latter breaks away to hide in the shadows. Individualism is noble if an ideal lifts and cheers it on; without ideals, it is a fall to a lower level than mediocrity itself.

In the Greek Cyrenaic, four centuries before Christianity, Aristippus announced that the only rule in life was utmost pleasure, pursued through all means, as if nature dictated men to glut and blunt his senses and the absence of ideals. Sensuality established as a system, leading to boisterous pleasure. Those Greek Cyrenaics even despised life itself; their last preachers extolled suicide. Such Ethic, practiced instinctively by the sceptics and depraved of all times, was never loyally raised as a system. Pleasure -as simple quantitative sensuality- is absurd and improvident; it cannot sustain morality. It would transform the senses into judges. That cannot be. Could happiness be to pursue a popular interest? A prudent and qualitative egoism, able to choose and calculate, would replace blind appetites. Instead of the vast pleasure, we would have refined delight that coordinates, prepares, anticipates and enjoys infinitely more, because intelligence likes to multiply future enjoyments with wise concocted alchemies. The Epicureans part away from the Cyrenaics. Aristippus sheltered bliss in coarse material joy; Epicurus raises the mind, idealizing it through the imagination. For the former all pleasures are fair game and can be pursued in any manner and without restraint; for this one, they must be chosen and dignified by the stamp of harmony. The original moral of Epicurus is all refinement: his creator lived an honorable and pure life. His rule was to pursue happiness and avoid pain, preferring the things that leave a balance in favor of joy. This emotional arithmetic is not incompatible with dignity, ingenuity and virtue, which are ideal perfections; allows cultivating them, if they can be a deep well of bliss.

It is in another Hellenic moral, nevertheless, where experimental idealism finds its perfect molds. Zeno gave humanity a supreme doctrine of heroic virtue. Dignity identifies with the Ideal; history does not know more beautiful examples of behavior. Seneca, from Nero’s court, preached with exquisite art his doctrine, applying it with admirable courage at his last

hour. Only Socrates died better and both of them more worthily than Jesus. The three great deaths of history.

Stoic dignity had its apostle in Epictetus. A sophist's convincing eloquence warmed his words of freedman. He lived as the most humble, satisfied with his belongings, sleeping in housing without doors, dedicated to meditate and educate, till the Roman decree that outlawed philosophers. He taught to distinguish, in every endeavor, what depends or does not of our effort. Place the Ideal in what depends on our labors and be indifferent to all else: that is a formula for experimental idealism.

All that the selfish wants or fears are crumbs. If the resistances on the road to perfection depend on others, it is better to ignore them, as if they did not exist and redouble the lofty effort. No material difficulty deviates the Idealist. If he wished to immediately influence other things that did not depend on him, he would found obstacles everywhere; against that environmental hostility can only reveal itself with the imagination looking deeper towards his interior. The one serving an Ideal lives from and for it; nobody will force him to dream if he doesn't want to, nor limit his ascent towards his dream.

This moral is not a passive contemplation; it only renounces to participate with its soul. Its assent to the inevitable is neither apathy nor inertia. To step aside is not to die; it is, simply, to wait the right hour for action, pressing on through preaching or the example. If the right hour arrives, it can be a sublime affirmation, as it was in Marcus Aurelius, never matched in ruling destinies of peoples: only he could inspire Renan's deepest pages and the most lyrical by Paul de Saint-Victor. Delicate and probing, his stoicism was more propitious to forge characters than to console hearts. In him, antiquity's thought reached its most tranquil nobility. Surrounded by perverse and ungrateful courtiers, he humbly taught his craft and gave grapes, like the vine, without claiming anything, preparing others for future harvests. Stoic idealists are men of his pedigree; they ignore the good they sprinkle on their own enemies. When the decadence of the domesticated spirits intensifies, when the climate of mediocracies becomes more suffocating, they create a new moral environment spreading Ideals: a new generation, learning to love them, rises and ennobles itself. Facing the bourgeoisies sickened by the climbing of material wellbeing –ignoring that their biggest misery is their lack of culture- they concentrate their efforts in

increasing the respect for the spiritual quest and the cult of all genius and originality. While vulgarity hinders the flight of genius, sanctity, and heroism, they come forward to re-establish them, suggesting ideals, preparing the arrival of those fertile hours that characterize the resurrection of races: the climate of genius.

All idealists' ethic transmutes values and raises merit's rank; virtues and vices barter their hues, more or less, creating new balances and equilibriums. That is, ultimately, the work of moralists: their originality is based in those changes of tone that modify the picture's perspective in which the bottom is almost imperturbable. Facing mediocrity, the dignified characters vehemently affirm their ideal. A mediocracy without ideals –an individual or a group- is vile, sceptic and cowardly: against her they cultivate deep wishes of perfection. In front of science as a trade and occupation they offer Truth as a cult; towards honesty of convenience, they offer selfish Virtue; towards the lucrative art of officers and public officials, they offer pure harmony of lines, forms and color; towards the complicity of mediocratic politics, they offer the best and maximal expansions of the Individual within their societies.

When the peoples are tamed and remain quiet, the great creators of ideals raise their voices. A science, an art, a nation, a race shaken by their echo, can jump out of their habitual riverbed. The Genius is the guide that sets the destiny between two paragraphs of history. If he appears in the origins, creates or founds; if in the resurgences, transmutes. In that instant, all the superior spirits soar, forging high thoughts for perpetual oeuvre.

VI- SYMBOL

In the eternal seesaw of time, the future always belongs to the visionaries. The endless contest between Idealism and mediocrity has its symbol: Cellini could not nail it in the loftier site than the wonderful Piazza de Firenze. Never the goldsmith's hand translated more sublime concept: Perseus exhibiting Medusa's head, whose body agitates in reptilian contortions under his winged feet. When the idealists' temperaments pause before the prodigy of Benvenuto, the metal comes alive and their lips seem to articulate perceptible words.

And it tells all youth that all effort for an Ideal is sublime, even if the result may be an illusion; that is worthy to follow his temperament and to think with his heart, if that would assist to create a strong personality; that all seed of romanticism must be encouraged, to wreathe of Auroras the only Spring that will never return. And it tells the mature ones, whose early gray hair sprinkle of autumn their most vehement chimeras, instigating the custody of their ideals under the pallium of the most severe dignity, before the temptations that conspire to mire them into the Stygian where the mediocre fall.

And in the Bronze's gesture, it seems that Idealism decapitates Mediocrity, handing over its head to posterity's judgment.

Chapter I
The Mediocre Man

“Cacciarli I ciel per non esser men belli, Ne lo profondo Inferno li riceve…” Dante, Inferno, Chant III.

The heavens expelled them, not to be less fair;
Nor them the nethermore abyss receives,

I- AUREA MEDIOCRITAS?

There are certain times when the naive shepherd is astonished before the surrounding nature. The penumbra thickens, the color of all things becomes the silhouette’s homogeneous gray, the grass’ whiff rises with the first crepuscular humidity, the herd lulls and readies to sleep, the remote bell ring their evening notes. The impalpable moonlight whitens upon falling over the horizon; some titillating stars disturb the firmament and a distant creek’s rumor over the rocks seems to talk mysterious subjects. Sitting on the smoothest stone by the road-side, the shepherd observes and mutes, in vain invited to meditate by the convergence of place and time. His primitive admiration is simple stupor. The natural poetry that surrounds him, reflecting in his imagination, does not become poem. He is, barely, an object in the picture, a brushstroke: just like the rock, the tree, the sheep, the road; an accident in the penumbra. For him, all things have always been so and will continue to be. From the earth he tramples to the herd he pastures.

The vast mass of men think with the head of that naïve pastor; would not understand the language of who would explain a mystery of the universe or of life, the eternal evolution of all known, the possibility of

human betterment in the ongoing human adaptation to nature. To conceive perfection, a certain ethical standard is required and an intellectual education is indispensable. Without them, fanaticism and superstitions are achievable; never ideals.

Those who live below that standard and do not acquire that education remain subject to dogmas that others impose on them, slaves to formulas paralyzed by the rust of time. Their routines and their prejudices seem eternally invariable; their obtuse imagination does not conceive past or future perfections; the narrow horizon of their experience constitutes the forced limit of their mind. They cannot conceive an ideal. They will find in others the spark capable of igniting passions; Become sectarians. And do not even notice the irony of those inviting them to go with the herd in the name of ideals they can serve, not understand. Every dream followed by crowds, is only dreamt by few visionaries, who are their legitimate owners.

Human inequality is not a modern discovery. Plutarch wrote, centuries ago, that “animals of the same species differ less from each other than men from other men” (Moral Works, Book III). Montaigne adopted the same opinion: “there is more distance between such and such a man, than between such a man and beast: meaning, that the most excellent animal is closer to the less intelligent man than this one from an great and excellent man.” (Essays, Book I, Chapter XLII). Those who continue to affirm human inequality don’t intend to say more: This one will be in the future just as absolute as in the times of Plutarch or Montaigne.

There are men mentally inferior to the average of their race, their time and their social class; there are also those superior. Between them fluctuates a great mass impossible to characterize by inferiorities or excellence.

Psychologists have refused to deal with the latter; art disdains them by colorless; history does not know their names. They are uninteresting; the search for defined edges, firm brushstrokes or characteristic features would be in vain. Moralists cover them with the same disdain. Individually, they don’t deserve the contempt that chastises the wicked; neither the Apology reserved for virtuosos.

Their existence is, nevertheless, natural and necessary. In everything that offers degrees there is mediocrity; in the scale of human intelligence, it represents the chiaroscuro between talent and stupidity.

With this in mind, we will not say that it is always commendable. Horatio did not say Aurea Mediocritas in the general and absurd sense those incapable to stand out by their ingenuity, their virtues or their work proclaim. Another was the view of the poet: placing tranquility and independence as the greater good of man, extolling the joys of simple living, which is as far from opulence as from misery, calling that material mediocrity, Golden. In the Epicurean sense, the sentence is true and confirms the remote Arab proverb: “A medium and tranquil existence is preferable to opulence replete with preoccupations.”

To infer that moral, intellectual and character mediocrity is worthy of respectful homage, implies twisting the intention of Horatio: in memorable verses (Ad Pis., 472) disparaging mediocre poets:

Mediocribus esse poetis

Non di, non homines, non concessere columnae.

Neither men, nor gods, nor booksellers' shelves permit ordinary poets to exist.
— Horace, *Ars Poetica* (18 BC), 372

And it is licit to extend his verdict to those mediocre spiritual men. Why subvert the classical meaning of Aureas Mediocritas? Why suppress the different levels between men and shadows, as if reducing the excellent a bit and polishing the opaque another bit would attenuate the inequalities created by nature?

We don’t conceive social development as the end result of conformity of individuals, but as the harmonic combination of originalities incessantly multiplied. All enemies of diversity become enemies of progress; it is natural, therefore, that they consider originality as an unforgivable defect. They confuse common sense with the good sense, as if entangling the meaning of words could relate corresponding ideas. We affirm that they are antagonistic. Common sense is collective, eminently retrograde and dogmatic; the good sense is personal, always innovative and liberating. They are recognized for the obsequiousness towards servitude and natural aristocracy. That insurmountable heterogeneity gives birth to the intolerance of the mediocre spirits towards original sparks; they narrow their lines to defend themselves, as if differences were crimes. Diversity is a fundamental postulate of psychology. Traditions and laws may establish common rights

and duties to all men; but they will always be as diverse as the waves cresting the surface of the Ocean.

II- MEN WITHOUT PERSONALITY

Individually considered, mediocrity can be defined as the absence of personal characteristics that permit distinguishing the individual in its society. The latter offers the same bale of routines, prejudices and domesticities: it is sufficient to round up one hundred men for them to agree on the impersonal: “gather a thousand geniuses in a council and you will have the soul of a mediocre.” These words denounce that which does not belong to each man and that when many gather, is revealed by the low level of collective opinions.

The individual personality begins in the precise point where each human becomes different to others; in many that point is simply imaginary. For this reason when classifying human characters the need to separate those who lack characteristic features is understood: random products from the environment, from the circumstances, the education provided, and the surrounding goods. Ribot has named those who live without announcing their existence “Indifferents”. Society thinks and feels for them. They don’t have a voice but an echo. There are no defined lines, not even in their own shadow, which is barely, a penumbra.

They cross the world stealthily, afraid that somebody may reproach them for the audacity of their vain existence, as smugglers of life. And they are so. Even if men lack a transcendental mission on Earth, on which surface we live just as naturally as roses and worms, our life is not worth living unless it is exalted by ideals: the highest pleasures are inherent to setting goals of perfection and their pursuit. The vegetative existences do not have biographies: in the history of society the only one alive is the one who leaves tracks in things or spirits. Life is valuable if we use it, accomplishing deeds. The one who has lived more is not the oldest one, but the one who has felt an ideal better; gray hairs announce old age, but say nothing of how much youth preceded it. The social measure of man is in the permanence of his deeds: Immortality is the privilege of those who make them survive centuries, thus measured.

The power wielded, favors begged, money hoarded and dignities achieved have ephemeral value that can satisfy the appetites to those who do not carry within, in their intrinsic virtues, the moral strength that beautifies and rate life: the affirmation of the personality and quantity of manhood put forth in the realization of our self. Living is learning, to ignore is less; Living is loving, to link us to a greater part of humanity; is admiring, to share excellences of nature and humans; it is an effort to improve, an incessant eagerness to rise towards defined ideals.

Many are born; few live. Men without personality are innumerable and vegetate molded by their environment, like melted wax. Their morality of catechism and grid intelligence constrict them to a perpetual discipline of thought and behavior; their existence as social unit is negative.

Men of fine character can demonstrate sublime crests, like the oceans; in the tamed temperaments all appears to be a quiet surface, as in swamps. The lack of personality makes them incapable of initiative and resistance. They parade unnoticed, without learning nor teaching, diluting in boredom their tastelessness, vegetating in society which ignores their existence: Zeros that qualify nothing and count nothing. Their lack of moral strength makes them yield at the slightest pressure, suffer all the influences, high and low, big and small, transiently dragged up by the weakest wind or wallowed by the tiny wave of a creek. Ships of large sails, but without helm, they can't guess their own route: Ignore if they will run around on a sandy beach or crash against the reefs.

They are everywhere, although in vain we could search for a recognizable one: if we were to find him, he would be an original for the sole reason of enrolling in mediocrity. Who does not ascribe to some virtue, talent or firm character? Lots of clumsy brains take pride in their stubbornness, confusing paralysis with firmness, which belongs to few select ones; the villains boast of their roguery and shamelessness, mistaking them with wit. The servile and limited spirits pride themselves on being honest, as if inability of evil could somehow be confused with virtue.

If we were to take into account the good opinion that all men and women have of themselves, it would be impossible to identify the ones characterized by the absence of personality. They all believe they have one, and very much theirs. Nobody identifies that society has subjected them to

that arithmetic operation reducing lots of quantities to a common denominator: Mediocrity.

Let's study the enemies of all perfection, sightless to the luminaries and the stars. There is a vast bibliography about the inferiors and insufficients, from the criminal and delirious to the mentally retarded and the idiot; there is, also, a rich literature dedicated to studying genius and talent. History and Art converge to maintain their cult. The former and the latter are, however, exceptions. The habitual is not the genius or the idiot, neither talent nor imbecility. Men that surround us by the millions, the ones who prosper and reproduce in silence and darkness, are mediocre.

The psychologist must dissect their mind with firm scalpel like the professor did to the corpses eternized by Rembrandt in his Lesson of Anatomy: his eyes seem to light up gazing at human nature's entrails and his lips pulsate of serene eloquence telling their truth to those around.

Why don't we stretch the man without ideals over our autopsy table, till we learn what he is, how he is, what he does, what he things and what is he for? His Ethopoeia will become a basic chapter of Psychology, Ethics and Moral analysis.

III- ABOUT THE MEDIOCRE MAN

With diverse denominations and from heterogeneous points of view it has been attempted to define the man without personality. Philosophy, statistics, anthropology, psychology, esthetic and moral sciences have contributed to defining types more or less exact; the essentially social value of the mediocrity has not been noticed. The mediocre man –as, in general, human personality – can only be defined in relationship to the society in which it lives and for its social function.

If we could measure the individual values, they would graduate in a continuous scale, from low to high. Among the few and extreme types, we would observe an abundant mass of subjects more or less equivalent, accumulating in the central part of the series. Vain illusion it would be to search there for the hypothetical archetype of Humanity, the normal Man that Aristotle searched for in antiquity; centuries later the peregrine idea reappeared in the whirlwind spirit of Pascal. Average, in effect, is not

synonym with normality. The normal man does not exist; it cannot exist. Humanity, like all species alive, evolves continuously; its changes take place unequally in numerous diverse social aggregates. The normal man in one society does not belong to another one, the one of a thousand years ago, would not be today or in the future. Morel was mistaken, forgetting this principle, conceiving the normal man as a specimen of the "Editio Princeps" of Humanity launched into circulation by the Supreme Maker. Starting from this premise, he defined the degeneration, in all its forms, as a pathologic divergence from the perfect original specimen. From there, to the cult for the primitive men there was a short step. Happily, the contemporaneous anthropologists put distance from such prejudice. Man – we now say- is an animal that evolves in the most recent geologic times of our planet; was not perfect in its origin and his perfection does not consist in returning to the ancestral forms, arisen from the simian animalism. If we did not believe it, we would renew the hilarious legends of the fallen angel, of the tree of good and evil, of the tempting serpent, of the apple taken by Adam and of the lost paradise…

Quetelet attempted to formulate an anthropologic or social doctrine about the Average Man: his essay is a statistical inquisition complicated by innocent applications of the abused "in medio stat virtus". We will not fall into the mistake of accepting that the mediocre men can be recognized by physical or moral attributes that may represent an average of those observed in the human species. In that sense, it would be an abstract product, without corresponding to any real existing individual.

The concept of human normality could only be relative to a determined social environment; would the ones who best keep the "marching beat" be normal? How about the ones who align perfectly in the lines of social conventionalism? In this sense, the normal man would not be synonym of balanced man, but of tamed and domesticated Man; passivity is not equilibrium or balance, it does not result from energy but from its absence. How could we confuse the great harmonious individuals, Leonardo, Goethe, with the amorphous ones? The equilibrium between two loaded plates cannot be compared with the stillness of empty scale. The man without personality is not a model but a shadow; if there is danger in the idolatry of heroes and representative men, in the manner of Carlyle or Emerson, more so in repeating those fables that would allow seeing as an

aberration all excellence of character, of virtue and intellect. Bovia has pointed out this grave mistake, depicting the average man with precise psychological features: “Is docile, accommodative to all small opportunities, very able to adapt to all the temperatures of a variable day, informed and aware of business transactions, resistant to the combinations of the shrewd; but dislocated from his mediocre sphere and anointed by a happy combination of intrigues, falls apart always and promptly, precisely because he is an equilibrist and does not carry within himself the forces of equilibrium. Equilibrist does not mean balanced. This is the most serious prejudice of the balanced mediocre man and the unbalanced genius.”

In his most indulgent commentators, that alleged equilibrium is established between qualities not worthy of admiration, resulting in more pity than envy. Some time ago, Lombroso received a telegram from North America. It was in fact from a great Newspaper, soliciting a long telegraphic reply to the presented question with the suggested recommendation of a check: “which one is the normal man”? The answer disconcerted, no doubt, the readers. Far from extolling his virtues, it drew a picture of negative and sterile characters: “Good appetite, industrious, ordered, selfish, devoted to his habits and customs, misoneist, fearful of change, patient, respectful of all authority, domestic animal.” Or in a few words, as mentioned by the Latin poet Horace: Fruges consumere natus. “Born to consume the fruits of the earth.”

With small variations, this definition evokes the one of the philistines: “product of habit, destitute of phantasy, decorated by all the virtues of mediocrity, carrying out an honest life thanks to the moderation of their demands, lazy in their intellectual conceptions, enduring with moving patience the full bale of prejudices inherited from his forbearers.” In these lines reflect the invectives, already classic, of Heine against the mentality he believed common among his country fellowmen. On his part, Schopenhauer, in his Aphorisms, defined the perfect philistine as a man who allows himself to be deceived by appearances and takes seriously all the social dogmatisms: constantly occupied in subjecting himself to mundane farces.

To these definitions of the average man, others of intellectual or esthetical character can be rendered, not without interest, although unilateral. For some, mediocrity would consist in the ineptitude to exercise

the highest qualities of wit and cleverness: for others, it would be the inclination to think down to Earth. Mediocre would correspond to Bourgeois, in contraposition to Artist. Flaubert defined it as “a man who thinks lowly”. Judged under this light, he seems detestable.

Such attitude gives room to the magnificent profile silhouette of Hello, forgotten catholic writer who taught us to admire Ruben Dario. Separates the mediocre from the imbecile; this one occupies one extreme of the world and the genius occupies the other one; the mediocre is in the center. Would it be, then, what in philosophy, politics or literature is called an eclectic, a just mean? Not at all, he answers. The one who is in the golden mean knows it, has the intention of being; the mediocre man doesn’t even suspect it. The excellent is there by nature, not by opinion, by character and not by accident. The mediocre man continues to be so in all minutes of his life, in any frame of mind. The characteristic and unequivocal sign is his deference for the opinion of others. Never speaks; always repeats. Judges men as he hears them judge. He will revere his most cruel adversary if this one rises; will disdain his best friend if nobody praises him. His yardstick lacks initiative. His admirations are prudent. His enthusiasms are official. That descriptive definition – analogous to those repeated by Barbey D’Aurevilly- possess a very suggestive eloquence, although departs from esthetic premises to reach moral conclusions.

The “normal man” of Bovio and Lombroso, corresponds to the “philistine” of Heine and Schopenhauer, both approximating the “Bourgeois” anti-artistic of Flaubert and Barbey D’Aurevilly. But, it’s necessary to acknowledge, these definitions are insecure from the vantage point of social psychology; it’s more convenient to search for a more exact and unequivocal, tackling the issue through other ways.

IV- SOCIAL CONCEPT OF MEDIOCRITY

No man is exceptional in all of his aptitudes, but we could not affirm that the ones that do not excel in any discipline are mediocre. They parade before us, as simple specimens of natural history, with equal rights to those of geniuses and imbeciles. They exist: we must study them. The moralist will later say if mediocrity is good or bad; for the psychologist, for the time being, it is indifferent; observes the characters in the social medium in

which they live, describes, compares and classifies them as other naturalists observe fossils in the riverbed or butterflies in the flower's corolla.

Notwithstanding the infinite individual differences, there are groups of men that can be encompassed within common types; such classifications constitute the science of human characters, Ethology, that recognizes in Theophrastus his legitimate progenitor. The old ones based it on temperaments; the modern ones search for their foundations in the preponderance of certain psychological functions. These classifications, admissible from some special vantage point, are insufficient for ours.

If we observe any human society, the value of its components is always relative to the total: Man is a social value.

Each individual is the product of two factors: heritage and education. The first tends to provide organs and mental functions transmitting the previous generations; the second is the result of multiple influences of the social environment in which the individual is obligated to live. This educative action is, consequently, an adaptation of the hereditary tendencies to the collective mentality: a continuous acclimation of the individual to society.

Children develop as an animal of the human species until they start to distinguish nonliving things from living things and to recognize among these to their peers. The beginnings of their educations are guided by the people who surround them, becoming more decisive the influence of the environment; from the time this one prevails, they evolve as members of their society and their habits organized by imitation. Later, the acquired variations over their individual experience may characterize a man as a differentiated person within his society.

Imitation has an ample role, almost exclusive, in the formation of the social personality; invention produces, instead, individual variations. That one is conservative and acts creating habits; this one is evolutionary and evolves through imagination. The diverse adaptation of each individual to his environment depends on the balance between what he imitates and what he invents. They all can't invent or imitate in the same manner, since these aptitudes are exercised over certain congenital ability, initially unequal, received through psychological heritage.

Predominance of variation determines originality. To vary is to become somebody, differentiate oneself is to have character, a plume, big or small: finally, a Crest, indicating that we don't simply live as a reflection of others. The capital function of the mediocre man is the imitative patience. The one of the superior man is creative imagination. The mediocre aspires to blend with those who surround him; the original tends to differentiate from them. While one thinks with society's head, the other aspires to think with his own. Therein lies the distrust that surrounds the original characters: nothing seems more dangerous than a man that attempts to think with his own head.

We could sum up: Considering each individual in relation to his environment, three elements concur to form his personality: biological heritage, social imitation and individual variation. All, when born, receive as inheritance from the species the elements to acquire a specific personality.

The inferior man is a human animal; in his mentality, the instinctive tendencies take over, condensed by that inheritance and making up the "soul of the species". His ineptitude for imitation does not allow him to adapt to the social environment in which he lives; his personality does not develop to the usual level, living below the dominant cultures, and often beyond legality. That insufficient adaptation determines his inability to think like the rest and share the common routines. Most, through the imitative education, copy from other people nearby, a social personality perfectly adapted.

The mediocre man is a shadow projected by society; is, essentially imitative and is perfectly adapted to live with the herd, reflecting the routines, prejudices and dogmatisms acknowledged as useful for the domesticity. Just like the inferior inherits the "soul of the species", the mediocre acquires the "soul of society". His characteristic is to imitate those who surround him: to think with other's head and be incapable of forming their own ideals.

A minority, besides imitating the social mentality, acquire peculiar variations, an individual personality, clearly differentiated.

The superior man is a fortunate accident for human evolution. Is original and imaginative, disengaging from the social milieu according to

his own variation. This one overcomes the hereditary attributes of “the soul of the species” and the imitative acquisitions of the “soul of society”, making up the singular edge of the “individual soul”, distinguishing them within society. He is a precursor of new forms of perfection, thinks better than the medium that surrounds him is able to impose his ideals to the routines of the rest.

V- THE CONSERVATIVE SPIRIT

All existence is necessary. Each man has a contrast value if he lacks affirmation value; is a necessary detail in the infinite evolution of the proto-human to the super-human. Without shadows, we would ignore the value of light. Infamy induces us to respect virtue; honey would not be sweet if the aloe juice didn’t teach us to relish bitterness; we admire the flight of eagles because we know the crawling of the caterpillar; is more enchanting the singing of the nightingale when we have appreciated the whistling of the serpent. The mediocre represents a progress, compared with the imbecile, even if he seems one compared to the genius: his social idiosyncrasies are relative to the medium and the moment in which he acts. Otherwise, if he were intrinsically useless, he would cease to exist: natural selection would have exterminated him. It is necessary for society, as words are to style. But it would not be sufficient, to create him, to align all the words in the dictionary; style begins where individual originality appears.

All men of firm personality and fertile mind, regardless of philosophical school or literary creed, are hostile to mediocrity. All creation is an original effort; History conserves the names of few beginners and initiators and forgets uncounted followers that attempt to imitate them. The visionaries of new truths, the apostles of moral behavior, the innovators of beauty – from Renan and Hugo to Guyau and Flaubert-, see it as an obstacle with which the past blocks the advent of renewal.

Before the social moral, however, the mediocre find a justification, like all that exists by necessity. The eternal contrast of the forces that battle in human societies is translated to the struggle between two great attitudes that agitate the collective mentality: the conservative or humdrum spirit and the original or rebellious spirit.

Beautiful pages were dedicated by Dorado. He believes it impossible to divide Humanity into two categories of Men, ones rebellious to all and the others routine driven and boring; thus, we would not know which ones interpret life better. Neither, it is possible to remain immobile for the conservatives, nor is an unstable hustle of rebellious and untamed individuals, for whom nothing existing is good and no path worth following. It is plausible that both forces are equally necessary. Required to choose, would we give preference to a conservative attitude? Originality needs a robust counterweight to prevent its excesses; there would be swiftness in fustigating the methodic men of slow steps if they formed the most resistant social fabric, supporting the others. Just as in the organisms, different elements sustain each other; instead of observing each other as enemies, they should consider themselves cooperators of a unique but complicated work. If we only had rebels in the world, it could not function; and to be rebellious would be impossible if there wasn't anybody to rebel against. And without the innovators, who would push the carriage of life loaded with those so satisfied? Instead of fighting, both parts should understand that they would not have a reason to exist without the other. The sagacious conservative should bless the revolutionary and this one should reciprocate. Here's a new basis for tolerance: Every man needs his enemy.

If imitators and originals had the same rationale, as argued by the Spanish thinker, the justification would be complete. To be mediocre is not blame; being so, his conduct is legitimate. Are the ones extracting the most juice from life, attempting to have the best possible time in their short days on the planet, without dedicating an hour to their own moral betterment, without thinking about their fellow men nor posterior generations right? Is it sinful to behave in such manner? Perhaps the ones who think about themselves and live for others go astray? The selfless and altruists, the ones who sacrifice their joys and strength to benefit others, renouncing comforts and even their own life, as it frequently happens, transgress and sin? Even if thinking about tomorrow and dedicating to it part of our efforts is unfailing, it is impossible to stop living in the present and thinking about the present, even if partially. Before the future generations, are the current ones; before they were future generations and for them worked the past ones.

This reasoning, even if simple, would be respectable, if we could place the problem in the abstract terrain of the extra-social man, in other words,

beyond all present and future sanction. Obviously, each man is such as he is and could not be otherwise; abstracting oneself of all morality, the assassin would have as little blame for his crime as the genius for his creation. The original and the routine lover, the lazy and the hard working, the bad and the good, the generous and the hard-fisted, they all are despite themselves; they would not be if the equilibrium between their temperament and society could prevent it.

Why, then, Humanity admires Saints, Geniuses, Heroes and all who invent, teach or think about the future, embody an ideal or forge an Empire? Admires Socrates and Christ, Aristotle and Bacon, Caesar and Washington. Humanity applauds them because society has, implicit, a moral, an own table of values that applies to judge each one of its components, not according to individual convenience but according to social utility. In each people and in each age, the measure of greatness is in the ideals of perfection called genius, heroism and sanctity.

The conservative imitation must be judged by its resistance function, destined to contain the creative impulse of the superior men and the destructive tendencies of the antisocial subjects. In the preface of his essay about genius and talent, Nordau makes his praise ironic: for all higher minds the philistine is the black beast and in that hostility sees an evident ingratitude. It seems helpful; with a bit of benevolence could concede that relative beauty of things perfectly adapted to their object. It is the background perspective in the social scenery. From that limited esthetic depends all the relief acquired by the figures occupying the fore-ground. The ideals of the superior men would remain in a chimeric state were they not picked up and realized by philistines, without personal initiatives, who live waiting for –with charming absence of own ideas- the impulses and suggestions of bright brains. It is true that the mediocre man does not yield easily to the instigations of the originals, but their own inertia is warranty that he will only pick up the ideas of proven convenience to the social welfare. His great fault is that he, along with the masses, does not need to search for ideas. Despite this, it is all necessary; it is the public of this human comedy in which the superior men push forward to the footlights, searching for applause and sanction. Nordau even mentions with fine irony: “each time some men of genius gather themselves around a beer table, their first toast should be for the philistine.”

That ironic view that proclaims its conspicuity is as exaggerated as the esthetic one that relegates it to the lowest mental sphere, confusing it with the inferior man. Individually considered, through the esthetic moral lens, is a negative entity; but taken mediocre men as a group, we could acknowledge them a function of ballast, essential for the equilibrium of society.

They deserve that justice. Continuity of social life would be possible without that compact mass of people purely imitative, capable of conserving the routine habits society transfuse them through education? The mediocre invents nothing, does not create, does not push, does not break, does not engender; but, instead, zealously guards the framework of automatisms, prejudices and dogmas accumulated through the centuries, defending that common capital against the ambush of the inadaptables. The rancor to the creators is compensated by their resistance to the destructors. Through human history, men without ideals carry out the same role that inheritance in biologic evolution: they conserve and transmit the useful variations for the continuity of the social group. They constitute a force destined to contrast the dissolvent strength of the inferior ones and to contain the daring anticipations of the visionaries. The cohesion of the group needs them, as a byzantine mosaic needs the cement that sustains it. But –we must mention- cement is not the mosaic.

His action would be void without the fecund effort of the original creators, who invent the stuff later imitated by the mediocre ones. Without mediocre men, there would be no stability in societies; but without the superior men, progress could not be conceived, since civilization would be inexplicable in a race formed by men without initiative. To evolve is to change; invention leads to variation. Imitative men are limited to treasuring the conquests of the originals; the utility of the routine man is subordinated to the existence of the idealist, just as the fortune of the book-sellers depends on the ingenuity of the writers. The “social soul” is an anonymous enterprise that exploits the creations of the best “individual souls” summarizing the acquired and taught experiences by the innovators.

These ones are the minority but are the yeasts of future majorities. The routines defended today by the mediocre men are simple collective lists of ideals, conceived yesterday by original men. The thick of the social herd slowly occupies the positions boldly conquered long ago by their sentinels

lost in the distance and these ones are already too far when the mass approaches at their rearguard. That which yesterday was ideal against a routine will, in turn, become s routine tomorrow against another ideal. Indefinitely, because perfectibility is indefinite.

If habits summarize past experience of peoples and races, giving them unity, ideals orient future experience and mark their likely fate. Idealists and common, routine men are factors equally indispensable, although ones fear the others. They complement each other in the social evolution despite the oblique gaze between them. If the former do more for the future, the latter interpret better the past. Social evolution stimulated by the eagerness of perfection and contained by traditions not easily removed, would halt forever without the engines and would suffer sudden shocks without the others.

VI- SOCIAL DANGERS OF MEDIOCRITY

The psychology of the mediocre men is characterized by a common risk: the incapacity to conceive perfection and form an ideal. They are routine, honest and tamed men; thinking with the head of others, sharing the moral hypocrisy of others and adjusting their character to the conventional domesticities.

Ingenuity, virtue and dignity are beyond their domain. Privileges of the excellent characters; they suffer their presence and disdain them. They are blind for the auroras; ignoring the chimera of the artist, the dream of the genius and the passion of the apostle. Condemned to vegetate, they do not suspect the existence of the infinite beyond their horizons.

The horror of the unknown binds them to a thousand prejudices, making them fearful and indecisive: nothing goads their curiosity; lacking initiative and always looking back to the past as if they had eyes in their nape. They are incapable of virtue; do not conceive of it or it demands too much effort. No eagerness of sanctity excites the blood in their hearts; sometimes not offending, fearful of remorse.

They do not vibrate to the high tensions of energy; they are cold, although they ignore the serenity, apathetic without being farsighted; accommodative always, never balanced. They don’t know how to shudder

under a tender caress, nor pounce of outrage before an offense. They don't live their lives for themselves, but for the ghost they project in the opinion of others like them. They lack backbone; their personality disappears as a coal stroke. They exchange honor for a favor and lock their dignity to avoid a hazard; they would renounce living before they would shout the truth facing the mistake of many. Their brain and their heart are hindered equally, like the poles of a worn magnet.

When they gang up, become dangerous. The strength in numbers replaces the individual weakness; gathering by the thousands to oppress those who refuse to chain their mind with the links of routine.

Escaping the curiosity of the wise through the armor of their insignificance, they become stronger in the total cohesion; this is why mediocrity is morally dangerous and its total is harmful in some moments of history: when the climate of mediocrity reigns.

There are ages in which the social equilibrium breaks in their favor. The climate becomes refractory to all effort of perfection: ideals narrow and dignity flees and accommodative men have their blooming spring. States become mediocracies; the lack of aspirations to maintain the moral and cultural level deepens the swamp.

Although isolated they don't deserve attention, in aggregate form a regimen, representing a special system of unmoving interests. They subvert the moral value table, distorting concepts: thinking becomes delirium, dignity is irreverence, justice is sentimentalism, sincerity is foolishness, admiration grows into imprudence, passion blossoms into naivety and virtue is stupidity.

In the battle of the present conveniences against the future ideals, of the vulgar against the excellent, the praise of the subordinate is frequently mixed with the defamation of the conspicuous, knowing that both affect the weak spirits. The dogmatists and servile sharpen their syllogisms to alter the values in the social conscience; live in the deception, feed off it, they sow it, water it, prune it and harvest it. Thus creating a world of false values that favors the culmination of the obtuse; thus knitting their spider web around the geniuses, the saints and heroes, obstructing the admiration of Glory. They close the gate with every unequivocal sighting of eagles.

No idealism is respected. If a philosopher studies the truth, he has to fight against the mummified dogmatists; if a saint pursues virtue, he splinters against the moral prejudices of the mediocre man; If the artist dreams new forms, rhythms or harmonies, the official regulations of beauty impede his progress; if the man in love wants to LOVE listening to his heart, he crashes against the hypocrisies of conventionalism; if a youthful impulse of energy leads to invention, creation, regeneration, old conservatism blocks it; if somebody with decisive gesture shows dignity, the herd of serfs barks; to those who take the road towards the summits, the envious try to damage their reputation; if destiny calls a genius, a saint or a hero to reconstitute a race or a people, the mediocracies tacitly regimented resist in order to promote their own archetypes. All Idealism meets in those climates its Tribunal of Holy Office.

VII- VULGARITY

Vulgarity is the aqua fortis of mediocrity. In the ostentation of the mediocre resides the psychology of the vulgar: it is sufficient to insist in the soft features of watercolors to have the aqua fortis. We could say that it is a renewal of old atavisms. Men become vulgar when in mediocrity reappears in their character from ancestral generations: the vulgar is a mediocre of primitive races and would have been perfectly adapted in savage societies, but lack the domesticity that would confuse them with their contemporaries. If he maintains a docile acclimation in its herd, the mediocre may adjust to routines, become honest and tamed without being decidedly vulgar. Vulgarity is an accentuation of the stigmas common to all expressive souls; blooming only when societies become unbalanced against idealism. It is the renouncement to the modesty of the ignoble. No original hustle touches it. Disdains the haughty verb and the compromising romanticisms. His grin is soft, his word mute, his gaze opaque. Ignores the flower’s perfume, the restlessness of the starts, the grace of a smile, the rumor of wings. It is the unassailable trench opposite to the blossoming of wit and good taste; it is the altar run by Panurgo where Bertoldo serves as a revering altar boy.

Vulgarity is the noble blazon of men full of themselves and of mediocrity; they guard it like the scrimpy watch a treasure. They boast exhibiting it, without suspecting that it is their insult. It bursts untimely, in words or gestures, destroying in just one second the charm and delight

prepared through many hours, smashing under its claw all luminous burst of the spirit. Colorless, deaf, blind, insensitive, surrounds us and lies in wait; luxuriating in the grotesque, lives in the murk and agitates itself in the darkness. It is to the mind what physical defects are to the body. A limp or strabismus: the incapacity to think and love, incomprehension of beauty, squandering of the life and all misery. The conduct itself, is not distinguished, nor vulgar; the intention ennobles the acts, elevating, idealizing them and in other cases determining their vulgarity. Some gestures, that in ordinary circumstances would be sordid, may become poetic, epic; when Cambronne, invited by the enemy to surrender, replies his memorable word he is raised to a Homeric stage and is sublime.

The vulgar men would ask Circe for the potions with which she transformed Ulysses' mates in pigs, to prescribe to all the owners of an ideal. They are everywhere and every time there is a rebirth of mediocrity: among the fine purple the same as among the scum, in the avenue and the suburb, in the parliament and in the jails, in the universities and in the mangers. Sometimes, they dare call their appetites ideals, as if the urgency of immediate satisfactions could be confused with the eagerness of infinite perfections. Appetites can be satiated. Ideals, never.

They disavow the lyric things because they demand high thoughts and gestures too dignified. They are incapable of stoicisms: their fragility is a calculation to enjoy more time the pleasures, reserving greater perspective joys for the impotent old age. Their generosity is always money given to usury. Their friendship is a servile complacence or a rewarding flattery. When believing to practice a virtue, they degrade honesty itself, making it ugly with some lowly misery that soils it.

They admire the selfish utilitarianism, immediate, small, cash. If expected to choose, they will never follow the road indicated by their own inclination, but the one marked by the calculation of their peers. They ignore that all spiritual greatness demands the heart's complicity. Ideals irradiate always great heat; their prejudices, instead, are cold, because they are alien. A thought not fertilized by passion is like the winter suns; they light up the surface but under their rays, one can die frozen. The baseness of purpose lowers the merit of all effort and annihilates the lofty things. Excluding the ideal, the possibility of the sublime is suppressed. Vulgarity is a north wind that freezes all seed of poetry, capable of embellishing life.

Men without ideals transform art in a job, science in a business, philosophy in an instrument, virtue in an enterprise, charity in a party and pleasure in sensualism. Vulgarity transforms love of life in pusillanimity, prudence in cowardice, pride in vanity and respect in servility. It leads to ostentation, to avarice, to falseness, to deceit, to greed and simulation; behind the mediocre man peers the savage predecessor who conspires in his interior besieged by the hunger of ancestral instincts and without another aspiration but satiety.

In these crisis, while mediocrity becomes bold and militant, idealists live confused, awaiting another climate. They teach to purify conduct in the filter of an ideal; imposing their respect to those unable to conceive of it. They have an arm in the cult of genius, of saints and heroes; awakening and pointing out examples to intelligences and emotions, attenuating the omnipotence of vulgarity, because in every grub and larvae dreams, perhaps, a butterfly. Men who have always lived in perpetual blossoming of virtue, with their example reveal that life can be intense and yet kept dignified; rising always to the summit without becoming dirty in the tortuous swamps; curling of passion, tempestuously, like the ocean. Vulgarity kept aside, without a chance of muddying the crystalline waters of that wave or disturbing the clear water of the fountains.

In the journey's meditation, hearing the whistling of the wind against the trees, Humanity appears as a sailing ship that traverses the infinite time, ignoring its point of departure and its remote destiny. Without sails, the vigor of the wind would be sterile; without wind, the largest sails would be useless. Mediocrity is the complex sail of societies, the resistance that these oppose to the wind to utilize its strength; the energy that inflates the sails, and drags the entire ship, steering and orienting it, are the idealists: always resisted by mediocrity. Thus, resisting just like the sails resist the wind, the routine men take advantage of the creators' thrust. Human progress is the result of this perpetual contrast among inert masses and propelling energies.

Chapter II

INTELECTUAL MEDIOCRITY

I- THE ROUTINE MAN

Routine is a fossil skeleton whose parts resist the centuries. It is not the daughter of experience but its caricature. One is fertile and breeds truths, while the other is sterile and able to destroy them.

In the Routine's orbit, we can find the mediocre spirits, avoiding drifting from it and crossing into new spaces; repeating that it is preferable the bad known to the unknown good. Occupied in enjoying the existing goods, become horrified by innovations that may perturb their tranquility and cause unrest. Sciences, heroism, originalities, inventions, virtue itself seem instruments of evil, breaking up the springs of their errors; as in the savages, children and uneducated.

Used to scrupulously copying the prejudices of the surrounding environment, they accept without analysis the ideas distilled in the social laboratory. Their impotence to accept and assimilate new ideas constrains them to frequent the old ones.

Routine, synthesis of all renouncements, is the habit of renouncing to think. In the Routine men, all is lesser effort; idleness rusts their intelligence. Each habit is a risk because familiarity to undignified individuals and detestable things develops. Acts that at the beginning induced modesty and shame, become natural; the eye perceives violent tones as simple shades, the ear hears lies with the same respect as truths, the heart learns to tolerate clumsy and rough actions.

Prejudices are beliefs that precede observation; judgments, exact or erroneous, are consecutive to observation. All individuals have mental habits; acquired knowledge facilitates future learning and marks its course. To some extent, nobody is immune to them. They are not exclusive to the mediocre men, but in them, they always represent a passive obsequiousness

to other's mistake. The habits acquired by original men are genuinely theirs, intrinsic: those habits constitute their criteria when they think and their character when they act; they are individualists and distinct. They differ substantially from the Routine, which is collective and always pernicious, extrinsic to the individual, common to the herd: spreading prejudices that infest the head of others. Those characterize men, these tarnish the shadows. The individual forges the former; society imposes the latter. The official education implicates this danger: attempts to erase all originality placing similar prejudices in different brains. The ambush persists in the unavoidable mundane dealings with the routine men. The mental contagion floats in the environment and threatens from all sides; a tone made original by contiguity has never been seen and it is more common for a wit to drowse among the prudish. Mediocrity is a lot more contagious than talent.

The routine men reason with the logic of others and are disciplined by others' desire, encased in a social locker, cataloguing themselves as recruits in the rows of a regiment. They are docile to the group's pressure, malleable to the public opinion's weight that flattens them as an inflexible laminator. Reduced to vain shadows, they live of others' judgment; ignoring themselves, limited to assessing themselves as judged by others. The excellent men, instead, disdain others' opinion in the just proportion that they respect theirs, always more severe, or that of their peers.

They are boorish, without thinking themselves unfortunate. If they did not presume as reasonable, their absurdity would soften us. Hearing them talk for an hour, it appears to have a thousand minutes. Ignorance is their executioner and hangman, as once upon a time it was for the serfs and still is for the savage; Ignorance makes them instruments of all the fanaticisms, ready for domesticity and incapable of dignified gestures. They would send a wolf and a lamb on a mission and would be sincerely surprised if the wolf returned alone. They lack good taste and aptitude to acquire it. If the humble museum guide did not stop them time and again, they would pass indifferently in front of Fra Angelico's Madonna or a portrait by Rembrandt.

They ignore that men's worth depends on their knowledge; negating that culture is the deepest fountain of virtue. They don't attempt to study; suspecting, perhaps, the sterility of their effort, like those mules that for the habit of marching step by step, have lost the use of galloping. Their

inability to meditate convinces them that there are no difficult problems and any reflection appears as sarcasm, preferring to trust in their ignorance to guess it all. If a prejudice is unbelievable, they accept it and spread it; and if believing themselves wrong, we could swear that they have been foolish to think. Reading induces effects of envenomation. Their pupils slide frivolously over absurd statements; enjoying the most superficial ones from which the clear spirits could learn nothing, but result deep enough to swallow the rough spirits. They swallow without digesting, risking mental constipation: ignoring that man does not live of that which he swallows but from what he assimilates. That mental obstipation may convert them in erudites and repetition may give them cud-chewing ruminant's habits. But accumulating data is not learning; swallowing is not digesting. The most intrepid patience does not transform a routine man in a thinker; it is necessary to know how to love and feel the truth. Notions poorly digested obstruct the understanding.

They populate their memory with calendar's maxims and resuscitate them from time to time as if they were sentences. Their precarious cerebration stutters average thoughts, displaying simplicities which become the innocent foam of their foolishness. Unable to spur their own head, renounce all sacrifice, alleging the uncertainty of the result; they don't suspect that "there is more pleasure in marching towards the truth than arriving there".

Their beliefs, defined by the fanaticisms of all creeds, encompass zones marked by past superstitions. They call their preoccupations ideals, without realizing that they are simply bottled routine, parodies of reason, opinions without judgment. They represent the runaway common sense, without the bridle and restraint of the good sense.

They are prosaic. Do not possess the eagerness of perfection: the absence of ideals prevents them from adding to their acts the grain of salt that poetize life. That human foolishness that obsessed Flaubert intolerably saturates them. He described them in so many characters, as it is so important in real life. Homais and Gournisieu are his prototypes; it is impossible to judge if it is more foolish the aggressive rationalism of the freethinker apothecary or the unctuous casuistry of the professional ecclesiastic. It is for this reason that they were created happy, in accordance

with their doctrine: “Be stupid, selfish, and have good health, the three conditions to be happy. But if the first is missing, all is lost.”

Sancho Panza is the perfect incarnation of that human animalism; summarizing in his persona the most conspicuous proportions of foolishness, egotism and health. In a fatidic and prophetic time for him, he even maltreats his master, in a scene that symbolizes the villain overflow of mediocrity over idealism. Horrifying to think that Spanish writers turned in apologists of the rude Sancho Panza thinking to mitigate in this manner the havoc caused by Don Quixote’s ideals, opposing their bastard practical sense to the Knight’s chimeric dreams; somebody found him cordial, loyal, credulous, dreamer in a degree that made him an exemplary symbol of Nations. How not to distinguish that one has ideals and the other appetites, one dignity and the other servility, one has faith and the other credulity, one has original delirium in his head and the other absurd beliefs that belong to others? The author of the Life of Don Quixote and Sancho answer to all with deep emotion, where the spiritual conflict between the Master and the lackey is resolved with the evocation of the memorable words pronounced by the Don Quixote: “A jackass you are and a jackass you will be and a jackass you will become at the end of the course of your life”; the biographers say that Sancho cried and sobbed to become convinced that to be one he only needed a tail. The symbol is Christian. The moral of the fable is not less: in front of each forger of ideals, a thousand Sanchos align themselves undaunted, as if all the forces of foolishness had to be summoned to contain the advent of truth.

The brightness of originality blinds the routine men. They fly from the winged thinkers, albinos before their luminous reverberation, afraid to get drunk with the perfume of their style. If they could, they would proscribe them in mass, restoring the Inquisition or the Terror; equivalent aspects of the same dogmatist zeal.

All routine men are intolerant; their limited culture condemns them to be. Defending the absurd and anachronistic; they don’t allow their opinions to be validated by experience. They call heretic those searching a truth or pursuing an ideal; the blacks burn Bruno and Servet, the reds decapitate Lavoisier and Chenier. They ignore Shakespeare’s sentence: “The heretic is not the one burning in the bonfire, but the one igniting it. The tolerance of other’s ideals is supreme virtue of those who think. It is difficult for the

semi-cult; inaccessible. It demands a perpetual effort of equilibrium before the mistake of others; it teaches to tolerate that legitimate consequence of the fallibility of all human judgment. Men who have become exhausted to form their beliefs, know to respect those of others. Tolerance is the respect in others of our virtue; the firmness of the convictions, reflexively acquired, makes even the adversaries appreciate a merit whose price is known.

The routine men distrust their imagination, crossing themselves when it causes fear with heretic temptations. They renege the truth and virtue if they demonstrate the mistake of their prejudices; show grave restlessness when somebody dares perturb them. There have been astronomers that refuse to look at the sky through the telescopes, fearful to see their most firm mistakes debunked.

In all new idea, they anticipate danger; if they were told that their prejudices are new ideas, they would believe them dangerous. That illusion makes them speak nonsense with the solemn prudence of augurs fearful of pushing Earth out of its orbit with their prophecies. They prefer silence and inertia; not to think is their only way not to be mistaken. Their brains are lodging houses but without owners; others think for them, who are grateful for the favor.

In all that there are not prejudices definitely consolidated, the routine men lack opinion. Their eyes don't know how to distinguish light from shadows like the peasants don't know to distinguish gold from golden rocks; they confuse tolerance with cowardice, discretion with servility, complacence with indignity, simulation with merit. They call sensible to those who meekly subscribe the consecrated mistakes and conciliators to those who renounce to have self-beliefs; originality of thought causes them chills. They commune in all altars, knitting together incompatible beliefs and calling eclecticism their nonsense; For this reason, they believe that they may discover a particular insight and wit in their art of not committing themselves with decisive judgments. They do not suspect that the doubt of the superior man is different, even before it was explained by Descartes; it is eagerness to rectify one's own mistakes until learning that all belief is fallible and that ideals admit indefinite improvements. The routine men, instead, neither correct themselves nor abandon their misconceptions; their prejudices are like nails: the more they are stricken, the deeper they get. They get bored with the writers that leave a mark where they place their

hand, denouncing a personality in each phrase, more so if they attempt to subordinate the style of their ideas; they prefer the faded elucubrations of humble authors, exempt from the edges that provide relief to all forms and whose merit consists in transforming vulgarities through baroque adjectives. If an ideal twinkles in the pages, if the truth creaks the thought in the phrases, the books appear to them as material for the bonfire; when they can be a shiny milestone in the future or towards perfection; the routine men distrust them.

The cerebral box of the routine man is like an empty jewel case. They can't reason by themselves as if the brains are absent. An old legend relates that when the creator populated the world with people, started by making the bodies like mannequins. Before he launched them in circulation, he opened their skulls and filled them with a divine paste, amalgamating the spiritual aptitudes and qualities, good and bad. It was improvidence when calculating the quantities or dismay upon seeing the first few samples of his masterwork, but many were left without that past and were sent to the world with empty skulls. Such legendary origin could explain the existence of men whose head has a purely ornamental significance.

They live a life that is not living. They grow and die like plants. They do not need to be curious or observant. They are prudent, by definition, of a maddening prudence; if one of them were to pass by Pisa's Bell Tower, would run away fearing its collapse. The original man, imprudent, stops to observe and contemplate; a genius goes beyond; climbs the bell tower, observes, meditates, tries out, rehearses, until he discovers the highest laws of physics. Galileo Galilei.

If humanity could only count with routine men, our knowledge would not exceed those belonging to the ancestral hominids. Culture is the fruit of curiosity, of that mysterious restlessness that invites to watch the bottom of all abysses. The ignorant is not curious; never interrogates nature. Roberto Ardigo observed that the vulgar people spend their entire life watching the moon in the sky without wondering why it is always there without falling; they rather believe that asking that question is not proper of a sound man. They would say that it is there because it is its place and they would find it strange to seek an explanation to such a natural thing. Only the man of good sense that commits the mistake of opposing the common sense, in other words, an original or a genius –in this they are similar- can formulate the

sacrilegious question: Why is the moon there and it does not fall? That man who dares distrust the routine is Isaac Newton, a fearless man to whom it behooves to guess some similarities between the pale lamp suspended in the sky and the apple that falls from the tree rocked by the breeze. No routine man would have discovered that the same force is behind the moon moving up and the apple, falling down.

In those men, immune to the truth's passion, supreme ideal to which thinkers and philosophers sacrifice their lives, impulses of perfection do not fit. Their intelligence is like dead waters; populated by deadly germs they end up rotting. Those who do not cultivate their mind, go straight to the disintegration of their personalities. Not fighting one's ignorance is to perish. The fertile terrains become populated by brush and weeds if not cultivated; the routine spirits become colonized by prejudices, which enslave them.

II- INTELLECTUAL MEDIOCRITY'S STIGMAS

In the true mediocre man the head is a simple body's ornament. If he were to hear us say that it is meant to think, he would believe that we are crazy. And the same opinion they would level to Pascal if they were to read his decisive words: "I could conceive a man without hands, without feet; and even without a head, if experience did not teach me that through the head we think. Thoughts are what characterize men; without it we could not conceive human beings ." (Pensees, XXIII). If from this we were to deduct that who doesn't think does not exist, the conclusion would be hilarious.

Born without esprit de finesse, in vain would become desperate to achieve it. Lacks perspicacity and sharp-sightedness; condemned to not dig into things or peoples. His foolishness does not present solutions of continuity. When jealousy corrodes him, their candor's ermine presents not a single spot of ingenuity.

The Mediocre Man is solemn. In the pompous grandiloquence of the exteriorities searches for a costume for his intimate hollowness: escorts with soft rhetoric small acts and pronounces unsubstantial words, as if the

entire Humanity would like to hear them. Mediocracies demand of their actors certain conventional seriousness, which lends importance in the collective illusion. The successful ones know it; they adapt to become those empty "personalities of respect", accurately pelted by Stirner and exposed by Nietzsche to the sneer of all posterities. They do nothing to dignify their true self, only eager to inflate their social phantom. Slaves to the shadow that their appearances have projected in others' opinions, they end up preferring them to themselves. That cult of the shadows compels them to live in perpetual state of alarm; supposing that a moment of distraction is sufficient to compromise the work patiently elaborated over the years. They detest laughter, fearful that the gas may escape through the corner of the mouth and the balloon may deflate. They would fire a public servant if surprised him reading Boccaccio, Quevedo or Rabelais; believing that good humor compromises respectfulness and stimulates the anarchist habit of laughter. Constrained to vegetate in narrow horizons, they disdain all that is ideal and all that is pleasurable, in the name of the immediately profitable. Their mental myopia keeps them from understanding the supreme equilibrium between elegance and force, beauty and knowledge. "Where they hope to discover the graces of the body, agility, dexterity, flexibility, reject the gifts of the soul: depth, reflection, wisdom. They erase from History that the wisest and most virtuous of men – Socrates- danced". This sharp warning from Montaigne, in his Assays, deserved corroboration from Pascal in his Thoughts: "Ordinarily Plato and Aristotle are imagined with long togas and as grave and serious characters. They were good subjects who had fun, like others, among friends. They wrote their laws and treatises of politics to amuse and entertain themselves; that was the least philosophical part of their lives. The most philosophical was to live simply and serenely". If the mediocre man were to renounce his solemnity, would end up confused; unable to live.

They are modest, by principle, expecting all to follow suit. Demand that becomes easier as in them modesty is present in excess since they are devoid of true merits. They consider as harmful the one who affirms his own superiorities aloud as the one who laughs at their sumptuous conventionalisms. They call modesty the prohibition to reclaim the genius' natural rights, of sanctity or of heroism. The only victims of this false virtue are the excellent men, constrained to not blink while the envious tarnish their glory. For the fool, nothing easier than being modest and unobtrusive:

they are so by irrevocable necessity; the most inflated fake it by calculation, considering that the attitude is necessary complement of solemnity and allows the suspicion of prudish merits. Heine said: “The charlatans of modesty are worse of all”. And Goethe sentenced: “Only brigands are modest”. That does not stand in the way of that reputation becoming a treasure in mediocracies. It is presumed that the modest will never pretend to be original, neither will raise his voice, nor have dangerous opinions, nor disapprove the ones ruling, nor blaspheme about the social dogmas: the man who accepts that hypocrite mask renounces to live more than the accomplices allow. There is, however, another form of modesty, appreciable as a legitimate virtue: it is the dignified eagerness to not gravitate over the ones surrounding us, without slipping by this reason the smallest molecule of our dignity. Such modesty is simple respect for oneself and others. Those men are rare; compared to the falsely modest, they are like the four leaves clovers. There are losers that believe themselves misunderstood geniuses and resign themselves to being modest in order to please the mediocracy that may transform them in government officers or functionaries; and they are mediocre men, just like the others, with more poultice of modesty over the ulcers of their mediocrity. In them, as sentenced by La Bruyere, “the false modesty is the last refinement of vanity.. Tartarin’s deception is ridiculous, but Tartuffe’s is ignominious.

They adore the common sense, without being certain on what it is; confusing it with the good sense, that is its synthesis. They doubt when others decide to doubt and become eclectic when the others become so: they call eclecticism the system of those who, not daring have any opinion, they grab a little of everything and light up a candle at the altar of every saint. Afraid to think, as if in this, they feigned the greatest sin of the seven capitals, losing the aptitude for all judgments; for this reason, when a mediocre man becomes a judge, although he understands that his duty is to administer justice, becomes fastened by the routine and complies with the sad job of never fulfilling it and complicating it frequently.

The fear of self-compromise leads them to sympathize with a cautious skepticism. It is good to distrust the hypocrite who praises everything and the loser who finds all hateful and detestable; but it is one hundred times less appreciable the man unable of a Yes and a No, the man who vacillates to admire the worthy and execrate the miserable. In the first chapter of the

Characters, La Bruyere seems to refer to them, in a paragraph copied by Hello: “They are able to feel the beauty of a read manuscript, but do not dare declare their support until they have seen acceptance in the world and listened to the opinion of the ones deemed competent; do not risk their votes, preferring to be carried by the multitude. Then, they claim to be the first in approving the work, cackling that the public shares their opinion”. Afraid of judging, they feel obligated to doubting the youth; which does not prevent them, after their triumph, to say that they were their discoverers. Then, they lavish vows of slavery, which they call words of encouragement: a tribute to their unspeakable fear. Their protection to all superiority, already irresistible, is a vulgar anticipation over the certain glory: they prefer a propitious environment rather than hostile.

They do bad things by want of foresight or by thoughtlessness, like the children who kill sparrows throwing stones. They betray by carelessness and compromise by distraction and inattention. They are unable to keep a secret; to trust them with one is hiding a treasure in a glass box. If vanity does not tempt them, they cross the shadows without hurting others or themselves, carrying on their backs some optimism of Pangloss. By dint of patience, they can acquire some partial ability, like those perfected automatons who honor the modern toy stores: we could concede them some sort of quickness, intermediate between a complicated stupidity and an innocent mischief. They judge the words without noticing that they refer to things; become convinced that of that which already has a site marked in their noodle and show themselves elusive to that which does not fit in their spirit. They are parishioners of the word; unable to rise to the idea or conceive an ideal. Their greatest ability is always verbal and only arrive at bad language; trembling before the ones who can play with ideas and produce that spiritual grace such as the paradox. Through this, viewpoints that allow reconciling the opposites are discovered and we learn that all beliefs are relative to those who believe and profess them and opposing views can be believed by others at the same time.

Intellectual mediocrity makes man solemn, modest, indecisive and obtuse. When not poisoned by vanity and envy, it would seem that he sleeps without dreaming. Parading his life through the plains; avoids looking from the summits climbed by the seers and leaning out towards the abyss probed by the select few. He lives among the routine’s cogwheels.

III- MALEDICENCY

If they would limit themselves to vegetate, overwhelmed like caryatides under the weight of their attributes, the men without ideals would escape the censure and praise. Circumscribed within their orbit, they would be as respectable as the other objects that surround us. There is no guilt in being born without exceptional gifts; nobody could demand that they climb the sharp peaks ascended by the illustrious minds. They would deserve the indulgence of the privileged spirits, who do not deny it to the inoffensive imbeciles. These, being more indigent, may justify themselves before a dreamy optimism: Lefties in all, they break the boredom and make life seem shorter, entertaining the ingenious ones and helping them go about the journey. They are good companions, who empty the spleen during their march: we would have to thank their provided unsuspecting services. The mediocre men, just like the imbeciles, would become creditor to that friendly tolerance while kept in the same layer; when they abandon imposing their routines, they are simple specimens of the human flock, always ready to offer their wool to the shepherds.

Sadly, they tend to forget their inferior hierarchy and pretend to play the panpipe, with the laughable pretension that others march to the beat of their detuned rhythms. Then they become dangerous and noxious. Detesting those they cannot match, as if their existence were enough to offend them. Without wings to rise towards them, they decide to knock them down: the exiguity of their own worth induces them to chip away at others' merit. They sink their teeth in reputations that humiliate them, without suspecting that human conduct is never worse. Suffices this trait to distinguish the domestic from the worthy, the ignorant from the wise, the hypocrite from the virtuous, the villain from the gentleman. The lackeys can root about in fame; the excellent men do not know how to poison others' lives.

No allegoric scene has deeper eloquence than the famous painting by Sandro Botticelli. The Calumny of Apelles invites to meditate with painful recollection; in all of the Uffizi Galleries seem to resonate the words of the artist –no doubt- who wanted to put them on the lips of the Truth, to console the Victim: in its rancor is the measure of its merit…

Innocence lies in the center of the painting, belittled under the infamous gesture of Calumny. Envy precedes her, Deceit and Hypocrisy escort her.

All the vile and traitorous passions unite their implacable effort for the triumph of evil. Repentance looks sideways towards the opposite extreme, where lays the Truth, as always alone and naked; contrasting with the savage gesture of her enemies, she raises her index finger to the heavens in a tranquil appellation to divine justice. And while the victim joins her hands and extends them towards her, in an infinite and moving supplication, the judge Midas lends his large ears to Ignorance and Suspicion.

In this impassioned reconstruction of a painting by Apelles, described by Lucian, the soft brush seems to acquire dramatic firmness that overflows sweetness in the Madonna della Melagrana and the Saint Sebastian, invites to remorse with The Abandoned, and sanctifies life and love in the Joy of the Spring and the Birth of Venus.

The mediocre men, more inclined to hypocrisy than hatred, prefer the deaf slander and maledicency to the violent calumny. Knowing full well that the latter is risky and criminal, they opt for the former, whose infamy is surreptitious and subtle. One is bold, the other coward. The violent calumniator defies punishment, exposes himself; the slanderer avoids it. One keeps his distance from mediocrity, is antisocial, has the valor of being a felon; the other is a coward and hides behind the complicity of his peers, staying in the shadows.

The slanderous bloom everywhere: in the cenacles, religious retreats, in the clubs, in the academies, in the families, in the professions, harassing everyone who outlines some originality. They speak softly, demurely, persistent in their eagerness to drill others' happiness, sowing the seeds of all the poisonous weeds by the fistful. Maledicency is a serpent that hints itself in the conversation of the corrupt; their vertebrae are names, articulated by the dictionary's most equivocal verbs, to drag a body whose scales are tasteless adjectives.

They pour infamy in all the transparent glasses, with serenity of Borgias; the hands in control appear to belong to conjurors and prestidigitators, skillful in the manner and gentle in the form. A smile, a rising of shoulders, a frowning of foreheads, as if subscribing to the possibility of evil, are sufficient to blemish the probity of a man or the honor of a woman. The slanderous, coward among all the poisoners, is certain of his impunity; for this reason he is despicable and miserable. He

does not affirm, but insinuates; he even denies imputations that nobody makes, counting with the irresponsibility of making them in that manner. He lies with spontaneity as if breathing. Selects what converges to the detraction. States absently all the uncertain evil and with prudence keeps quiet all the good he knows. Neither respects the intimate virtues nor home secrets, nothing; injects the venomous drop that appears as an irruption in his irritated lips, until through the whole mouth, now a pustule, the interlocutor waits to see a bifid stylet instead of a tongue.

Without cowardice there is no maledicency. The one who can shout face to face an insult, who loudly denounces a vice and accepts the risks of his behavior is not a maledicent or slanderer. To be one it is necessary to tremble thinking of the possible punishment and to cover up with the least suspicious masks. The worse are the ones who curse while praising: Tempering their applause with rolled up reserves, more serious than the worse imputations. Such wretchedness in thinking is an insidious way to practice evil, of potentially bringing it about, without the courage of rectilinear action.

If these speaking basilisks have any varnish of culture, they pretend to cover their infamy with the canopy of spirituality. Vain hope; they are condemned to pursue grace and trip over falseness. Their jibe is not a smile, it is a grin. The exercise can make their malignity easier, but it does not become confused with the canny and just irony. Irony is wit’s perfection, a convergence of intention and smile, sharp in opportunity and just in measure; it is a chronometer, it does not run a lot, but with precision. This is ignored by the mediocre man. For him it is easier to ridicule a sublime deed than to imitate it. In the desktop discussions, his sharp tongue can be confused with grace, while sheltered by slanderous complicity. But the healthy Atticism of the one that all forgives by dint of understanding all is missing and that crystalline intelligence that allows deciphering the truth in the very essence of things that the mundane seesaw subjects our experience. Those snakes have perverse malignities because of the very lack of gentleman's nobility and its attributes; disguise of measured condolence the bitterness of their humiliated inferiority. The smallest slanderers are the most terrible, like the molecular forces that nobody sees and rusts the noblest metals. The maledicent man fears nothing while sowing their decoys and weeds; he knows that his back is protected by innumerable

accomplices, rejoiced every time an ignored spirit confabulates them against a star.

The talking mediocre man is worse by his moral than his style. Shyly scratches the ones he envies; in their poor paragraphs moderation of fear is noticeable, as if the dangers of responsibility bristled them. Plentiful among the bad writers, although not all the mediocre men get there; many limit themselves to be terribly boring, hounding us with volumes that could finish in their first paragraph. Their pages are filled with common places, like the exercises of the polyglot guides. They describe giving stumbling blocks against reality; objectives that operate and not retorts that distill; become desperate thinking that the sticker is not among the fine arts. If they undertake literature, it would seem that Vasco de Gama set out to discover all the common places, without catching a glimpse of the Cape of a Good Hope; if setting about science, their walk is like that of a mountain mule, stopping to ruminate the chewed hay half a century ago by their predecessors. Those devoted to rhapsody and paraphrasing practice that false modesty that is their conventional lie; they admire themselves with logia's solidarity, execrating any gust of wind or the flight of an eagle. They pale before the scornful pride of men whose ideals do not suffer inflections; feigning not understanding that virtue of saints and wise men, supreme contempt of all lies venerated by them. The mediocre writers, shy and prudent, prove themselves inoffensive. Only envy can make them jealous; then they prefer to become critics

The mediocre speaker is worse for his moral than for his style; his tongue multiplies by hundreds in polished copies and the words roll about without the tether of the ulteriority. Maledicency has immediate and dreadful efficacy. It is everywhere and threatens at any moment. When the inferior spirits gather taking turns in speaking nonsense of no interest to those who hear them, the terrain is propitious for the most treacherous to insult an illustrious man, attempting to belittle and debase him to his own level. The efficacy of defamation is rooted in the tacit complacency of those who listen, in the collective cowardice of those who can listen without becoming incensed; It would die if they did not provide a vital environment. That is its secret. Similar to the false currency, circulated without scruples by many who would lack the courage to coin it.

The tongues most embittered are the ones belonging to the individuals with less moral authority, as taught by Moliere from the first scene of Tartuffe:

“Ceux de qui la conduit offer le plus a rire. Sont toujours sur autrui les premiers a medire”. (“Those who offered the most laughter are always the first ones to measure others.”)

“It could be said that they pledge others’ reputation to diminish the contrast with theirs. That does not exclude the fact that there are feckless individuals whose blame is unconscious; they curse by idleness or amusement, without suspecting where the road through which they venture leads them. While recounting others’ mistakes they seem to place some self-pride in being interesting, augmenting them, adorning them, going insensibly from the truth to lying, from obtuseness to infamy, from maledicency to calumny. Why evoke the memorable words from Beaumarchais’ comedy?

IV- THE PATH TO GLORY

The mediocre man who ventures in the social ladder has urgent appetites: Success. He does not suspect that there is another thing, Glory, ambitioned only by the superior characters. Success is an ephemeral triumph. Glory is definitive, unblemished through the centuries. One is begged, the other one is conquered.

All courtiers of the mediocracy in which they live are pitiful; they triumph humiliating themselves, creeping, stealthily, in the shadows, disguised, braced in the complicity of innumerable similar men. The man of merit is ahead of his time, his pupil set on an ideal; imposes himself dominating, illuminating, fustigating, in broad daylight, with unveiled face, without humiliating himself and foreign to the clogging and choking of servility, subservience and intrigue.

Popularity has dangers. When the multitude stares for the first time at a man and applauds him, the struggle begins: poor the one who forgets about himself to think solely of others. Intention and hope should be set further, resisting the temptations of immediate applause. Glory is more difficult but more dignified.

Vanity pushes the vulgar man to pursue a notable job in public administration, unworthily if necessary; knowing that his shadow needs him. The excellent man is recognized because he is able to renounce to all prebends that may have for price a molecule of his dignity. The genius moves in his own orbit and does not wait for false sanctions of political, academic or mundane order; is revealed by the endurance of his illumination, as if his life was a perpetual sunrise.

The one who floats in the atmosphere as a cloud, sustained by the wind of others' complicity, can garner through adulation what others should receive for their aptitudes; but the one who obtains favors without merits should shiver: will fail later, one hundred times, with each wind change. The noble wits only trust themselves, wrestle, overcome obstacles, imposing themselves. Their paths are properly theirs; while the mediocre man gives himself to the collective mistake that drags him. The superior man goes against him with inexhaustible energies, until he clears his route.

Deserved or not, the success is the alcohol of those who fight. The first time intoxicates; the spirit agrees insensibly; later it becomes essential need. The first, big or small, is disturbing. One feels a strange indecision, a moral tickling that delights and bothers at the same time, like the adolescent's emotion who finds himself alone for the first time with his loved woman; tender and violent emotion stimulates and inhibits at the same time, instigating and unnerving.

To look ahead to success is equivalent to peering over a cliff: back up on time or fall into the abyss forever. It is an irresistible abyss, like a juvenile mouth inviting a kiss; few turn back. Undeserved, it is punishment, a filter that poisons vanity and makes one unhappy forever; the superior man, instead, accepts as simple anticipation of glory that small tribute of mediocrity, vassal to his merits.

It presents in one hundred ways, tempts through one thousand manners. Born by an unexpected accident, arrives through invisible paths. The simple praise of an esteemed maestro suffices, the occasional applause of a multitude, the easy conquest of a beautiful woman; they are all equivalent. Equally intoxicating. Over time, it becomes impossible to avoid the habit of this drunkenness; the only difficulty is to initiate the habit, as for all the vices. Later it is impossible to live without that comforting anguish and that

anxiety torments the existence of those who don't have wings to ascend without the help of accomplices and pilots. For the accommodating man, there is an absolute certainty: his successes are fleeting and illusory, as humiliating as it might have been to fetch them. Ignoring that the spiritual tree has fruits, he worries about harvesting the trash; living from the random and accidental, watching for the proper occasions.

The great brains ascend through the exclusive path of merit, or they don't. They know that in the mediocracies other routes are available; for this reason, they don't feel defeated, nor suffer a loss more than they enjoy a success; both are work of others. Glory depends on them. Success appears as a simple recognition of their right, a tax of admiration paid to them while alive. Taine got to know in his youth the pleasure of the teacher that observes crowds attending his lectures; Mozart has narrated the delights of the composer whose melodies keep returning to the passerby who whistles to give himself valor to go over a lonely crossroad at night; Musset confides that hearing his verses recited by beautiful women was one of his greatest pleasures; Castelar commented on the emotion of the orator who hears the frenetic applause offered by thousands of men. The phenomenon is common and not new. Julius Caesar, chronicling his campaigns exudes the savage drunkenness of the one who conquests peoples and annihilates hordes; Beethoven's biographers relate his deep impression when, after performing his 9th Symphony for the first time, he turned to contemplate the ovations that his deafness silenced for him. Stendhal has said, with his concise, elegant and gracious expression, the fulfillment of the fortunate lover that successively watches a hundred women shivering of fever and anxiety at his feet.

Success is beneficial if deserved; exalting the personality and stimulating it. It has another virtue: it exiles Envy, the incurable poison of the mediocre spirits. To triumph at the right time, deservingly, is the most favorable dew for any seed of moral superiority. Triumph is a balm of the sentiments, an efficacious lime against roughness of character. Success is the best heart lubricant; failure is its most hurtful corrosive.

Popularity or fame may give transiently the illusion of glory. They are their spurious and subordinate forms, extensive but not deep, splendorous but fugacious. They are more than the simple success, accessible to the common mortals; but they are less than Glory, exclusively reserved for the

superior men. They are tinsel, ornamental and soft stones, false luster. Direct manifestations of gregarious enthusiasm and, for this reason, inferior: crowd's applause, with some unconscious and communicative frenzy. The Glory of the thinkers, philosophers and artists, who translate their geniality through the written word, is slow, but stable; their admirers are scattered, no one applauds alone. In the theater and in the assembly admiration is fast and cheap, although illusory; the listeners beguile each other, adding up their enthusiasm and exploding in ovations. For this reason any cheap histrionic can get to know triumph up closer than Aristotle or Spinoza; the intensity which is Success is in reverse relationship to the duration, which is Glory. Such caricaturist aspects of celebrity depend on a secondary aptitude of the actor or of an accidental state of the collective mentality. Lessened the aptitude or transposed the circumstance, they return to their shadow and attend alive their own funerals.

Then, they pay for their recognitionevery penny; as living in perpetual nostalgia is their martyrdom. The sons of passing and ephemeral success should die when they become orphans. Some melancholic poet wrote that it is beautiful to live off one's remembrance; absurd sentence. It is equivalent to agonizing. It is the joy of the painter, handcuffed and bound by blindness, of the gambler that observes the game and can't risk a single chip.

In life one is an actor or public, helmsman or sailor. It is as painful to go from the helm to rowing, as to leave the stage onto a regular seat, even if this one is on the first row. The one who has known the applause does not know how to resign himself to obscurity; this is the cruelest part of any preeminence founded in other's caprice or in transient physical aptitudes. The public oscillates with the fashion; the body fades. The fame of an orator, of a fencer or of a comedian, only lasts a youth; the voice, the sword thrusts and the gestures come to an end, leaving behind that which in Dante's beautiful words represents extreme pain: to remember in misery the happy times.

For these accidental winners, the instant in which their error dissipates should be the last one of their lives. To come back to reality is a supreme sorrow. It is preferable that an excessive Othello kill a Desdemona close to aging over the stage, or for the acrobat to break his neck in a prodigious jump, or for the orator to rupture an aneurysm while he incites one hundred thousand men who applaud him, or for a Don Juan to be stabbed by the

most gorgeous and sensual lover. Since life is measured by its hours of joy, it would be best to bid farewell from it smiling, looking ahead with dignity, with the sensation that we have deserved to live it to the last instant. All illusions that evaporate, leave behind an indelible shadow. Fame and celebrity are not Glory: nothing more false than the sanction of the contemporaries and the masses.

Sharing the routines and the weaknesses of the environmental mediocrity, it is easy to become archetypes of the crowds and be pro-men among their equals; but who thus culminates, dies with them. The genius, the saints and the heroes disdain all submission and obedience to the present, placing the prows towards a remote ideal: the Pro-Men in History.

The moral integrity and the character's excellence are sterile virtues in the low environments, more accessible to the appetites of the domestic man than the haughtiness of the dignified man; in them, the false success festers. The Glory never girdles the temples of the ones who have become complicated in the ruins of their time with laurels; late frequently, posthumously sometimes, although always certain, they girdle the foreheads of those who looked ahead to the future and served an ideal, practicing that motto which was Rousseau's noble badge: Vitam ImpendereVero. "To devote one's life to truth."

CHAPTER III

MORAL VALUES

I.- TARTUFFE'S MORAL

Hypocrisy is the art of muzzling dignity; it mutes the scruples in the men unable to resist evil's temptation. It is lack of virtue to renounce it and lack of courage to assume its responsibility. It is the manure that fertilizes the vulgar temperaments, allowing them to proper in deception and deceit: like those trees whose branches become leafier when they grow close to swamps.

Where she goes by, it freezes all noble germ of ideal: cooling off enthusiasm. The men diminished by hypocrisy, live without dreams, hiding their intentions, masking their feelings, jumping like the skink; they have the intimate certainty, although unconfessed, that their acts are undignified, shameful, noxious, unredeemable. That is why their moral is insolvent: implying always a simulation.

No faith thrusts the hypocrites; they don't suspect the value of rectilinear beliefs. They avoid the responsibility of their actions, becoming bold in treason but timid in loyalty. They conspire and threaten in the shadows, throwing around ambiguous terms, praising with venomous reluctance and badmouthing with plush smoothness. They never display a singular award: they close all their spirit's slits through which their naked personality could lean out, without the social garb of fibs and lies.

In their yearning, they simulate the aptitudes and qualities that they consider advantageous to increase the shadows they project over their stage. Just like the exiguous spirits mimic the intellectual talent, using refined gimmicks and defenses, the subjects of dubious and undecided morality parody the moral talent, flaunting of virtue their insipid honesty. They ignore the verdict of their own internal tribunal: pursuing the safeguard provided by the accomplices of their conventional prejudices.

The hypocrite is wont to take advantage of their feigned virtue, more so than the truly virtuous. Swarming men hide under their costume; it would suffice to penetrate in the intimacy of their sentiments, for just one minute, to notice their duplicity and change esteem for disdain. The psychologist recognizes the hypocrite; there are features that distinguish the virtuous from the pretender, because while this is an accomplice of the prejudices fermenting in his social medium, the other possesses talents that allow him to soar above them.

All material appetite awakens his greed and befalls his mask. Is easy towards the flatterer and knows how to smell their masters' wishes, giving himself to the best party, prospering thanks to deceit and entanglements. Triumphs over the sincere, every time that success lies in vile aptitudes: the loyal man is frequently his victim. Each Socrates meets his Melitus and each Christ his Judas.

Hypocrisy has hues. If the moral mediocre decides to vegetate in the shadows, does not fall under the psychologist's scalpel: his vice is a simple reflection of lies that infest the collective moral. His guilt starts when he attempts to flap within his limited condition, pretending to be equal to the virtuous. Churning about in the swamps of intrigue, his honesty is blemished and is hurt in passions ignobly unleashed. Becoming capable of all ill-feeling. Supposing simply honest, like himself, every saint or virtuous man; does not rest limiting their merit. Always attempting to push them down and unable to reach them. Pursuits the superior characters, pretending to confuse their excellency with their own mediocrity, dully venting an envy that they don't confess, in the shadows, drooling without biting, lying submission and love to the same people they detest and gnaw. Their wickedness is marred by scruples that obligate them to be ashamed in secret; to discover them is the cruelest of torments. It is their punishment.

Hatred is praiseworthy if we compare it with hypocrisy. In this, we can recognize the surreptitious fearfulness of the hypocrite and the adamantine loyalty of the dignified man. Sometimes, this curls up and pronounces words that are a stigma or an epitaph; his roar is the light of fleeting lighting that does not leave scoria or scum in his heart, venting through a violent gesture; without poisoning him. The virile natures possess an excess of plastic force whose regenerating function heals promptly the deep wounds and brings about pardon. Youth has among its precious attributes the

incapacity to dramatize for long the evil passions; the man who has lost the aptitude to erase his hatred, is already old, irremediably. His wounds are indelible, like his gray hair. And like this ones, hatred can be dyed: hypocrisy is the dye of that moral gray-hair.

Without faith in any creed, the hypocrites profess the most rewarding. Suffocated by misunderstood precepts, their morality seems hollow; for this reason they need the crutch of a religion. Preferring the ones that assert the existence of the purgatory, they offer to redeem their guilt for money. That "afterlife" arithmetic allows them to enjoy more serenely the benefits of their hypocrisy; their religion is an attitude and not a feeling. Therefore, often exaggerate: is a fanatic. In saints and virtuous, religion and moral may gallop together; in hypocrites, conduct dances at a rhythm divergent from the one marked by the commandments.

The best theoretical maxims may become abominable actions; the more the practical moral rots, the greater the effort to rejuvenate it with rags of dogmatism. For this reason, Tartuffe's rhetoric is sumptuous and declamatory, archetype of the genre, whose creation places Moliere among the greatest psychologists of all times. Let's not forget the story of that oblique worshipper to whom the sincere Orgon picks up piously influencing the whole family. Clanto, a young man, dares distrust him: Tartuffe gets Orgon to expel from his home that bad son and makes him bequeath his estate. And it's not sufficient: attempts to seduce the consort of his guest. To expose so much infamy, his wife resigns herself to celebrate an interview with Tartuffe, to which Orgon attends but hidden. The hypocrite, thinking himself alone, exposes the principles of his perverse casuistry; there are actions forbidden by heaven, but it is easy to fix with it those books; if convenient, consciousness' bonds can be loosened up, rectifying evil acts with the doctrines' purity. And to portray himself he adds:

"En fin, votre scrupule est facile a detruire:

Vous etes assuree ici d'un plein secret.

Et le mal n'est jamais que dans l'eclat qu'on fait;

Le scandale du monde est ce que fait l'offense

Et ce n'est pas pecher que pecher en silence."

“Finally, your scruple is easy to destroy: you are here assured of a plain secret, and evil is found only in the noise caused, as the scandal of the world is what makes the offense and to sin in silence is not sinning.”

That is the moral of the Jesuit hypocrisy, synthetized in five verses which are the Pentateuch.

The moral of the virtuous man is different: it is found in the intention and the end of the actions, in the deeds, more than in the words, in the exemplary conduct and not in the unctuous oratory. Socrates and Christ were virtuous against the religion of their times: both died at the hands of fanaticisms already divorced from all moral. Sanctity is always beyond the collective hypocrisy. The materialistic exaggeration of the religious ceremonies frequently coincides with the annihilation of all idealisms in the nations and races; History points them out in the decline of the ruling houses and says that the Loyolism always underpins its moral decadence. In those hours of crisis, faith agonizes in decrepit fanaticism and formidably encourages the ideals that are reborn as a result, disrespectful, demolishing, although frequently predestined to fall in new fanaticisms and to oppose future ideals.

The Hypocrite is constrained to saving face, as much energy as the virtuous man places in caring for his ideals. He knows by heart the pertinent passages of the Sartor Resartus: because of them, he admires Carlyle, as much as others do because of their cult to The Heroes. Respect of rules makes the hypocrites of every age and nation acquire common features; there is a peculiar “manner” that goes beyond “Tartuffism” in all their adepts, as there is “something” that denounces the relationship among the affiliates to an artistic tendency or literary school. Those hypocrites’ common stigma, that allows recognizing them despite the individual hues imposed by rank or fortune, is their deep animadversion to the Truth.

Hypocrisy is deeper than lies: this one can be accidental, the former is permanent. The hypocrite transforms his entire life in a lie methodologically organized. Does the contrary to what he says, every time this provides an immediate benefit; lives betrayed by with his words, like those poets who disguise with long tresses the shortness of their inspiration. When the time to pronounce a truth arrives, the habit of lying paralyzes the lips of the hypocrite.

Just like laziness is the key to routine and greed is the root of servility, the lie is the prodigious instrument of Hypocrisy. Humanity has never heard more noble words than some of Tartuffe; but never has a man produced actions more in disagreement with them. Whatever it be his social rank, in full trust or in proscription, in opulence or in misery, the hypocrite is always ready to adulate and flatter the powerful and to deceive the humble, lying to both. The man who gets used to pronouncing false words ends up going back on his own without repugnance, losing all notion of loyalty to himself. The hypocrites ignore that the truth is the fundamental condition of virtue. They forget that multi-secular sentence of Apollonius of Tyana: "Lying belongs to serfs, free men speak truth". For this reason, the hypocrite is prone to acquire servile feelings. He is the lackey of those surrounding him, the slave of a thousand masters, of a million masters, of all the accomplices of his mediocrity.

The one who lies is a traitor: his victims listen to him presupposing he speaks truth. The liar conspires against others' quietude, disrespecting all, sowing insecurity and distrust. Looking awry persecutes the sincere, thinking them his natural enemies. He abhors sincerity, saying that it is the fountain of scandal and anarchy as if we could blame the broom of the accumulated dirt.

Deep down, he suspects that the sincere man is strong and individualist, cultivating thus his unbreakable haughtiness since his opposition to hypocrisy is an attitude of resistance to evil that hounds him from everywhere. He defends himself against the domestication and the common descent, telling his truth as he can, when he can and where he can. But he knows how to say it. Many saints taught how to die for it.

The costume and disguise help the weak; only what is believed not ours is feigned. The truants' grandsons speak more about nobility; virtue frequently dances in the lips of the shameless; the haughtiness serves as a chorus to the debased and impaired; chivalry is the picklock of the swindlers; temperance is found in the catechism of the vicious. They presume that from so much tinsel some particle will adhere to their shadow. And, in effect, this is modified by the constant labor; the mask benefits the contemporary mediocracies, perhaps those using it, lack the moral authority before the virtuous men. These do not believe the hypocrite, discovered once; they don't ever believe him, nor can they not believe him when they

suspect him lying: who is disloyal with the truth does not need to be loyal with lie and deceit.

The habit of fiction crumbles the hypocrites' characters, vertiginously, as if every new lie could push them towards the abyss; nothing stops an avalanche on the slope. His life is polarized in that abject honesty by calculation that is simple sublimation of vice. The cult of looks and appearances leads to disdain reality. The hypocrite does not aspire to become virtuous, but to seem so; does not intrinsically admire virtue, but wants to be counted among the virtuous because of the perks and honors that such condition may provide them. Lacking the audacity to practice evil, towards which they are inclined, is content suggesting that they hide their virtues because of modesty; but never get to use with ease the mask. Their dealings poke out somewhere, like the classic ears under Midas' crown. Virtue and Merit are incompatible with Tartuffism; the observation leads to distrust of mysterious virtues. As Horatio taught that "the hidden virtue differs little from dark laziness." (Od. IV, 9,29.)

Not having valor for the truth, it is impossible to have it for justice. In vain the hypocrites live boasting of great equanimity and procuring to acquire Catonian prestige: Their prudent cowardice impede them to be judges every time they can become compromised by a ruling. They prefer to stutter bilateral and ambiguous sentences, claiming that there are light and shades everywhere; unable to reach a verdict, not by philosophy but for incapacity to accept the responsibility of their judgments. Saying that these must be relative, in their most intimate noodle they believe their opinions to be infallible. They don't dare proclaim their self-reliance; they prefer to push forward in their lives without more compass than success, offering the flank and skirting, elusive to place the prow forward towards the slightest obstacle. The straight men are the target of their vicious rancor, because with their rectitude they humble the oblique spirits; but these do not confess their cowardice and slavishly smile to the gazes that torture them, although they feel the shame: they limit themselves to study the defects of the virtuous men to filter the perfidious and false venoms in the homage that at all hours they are obligated to tribute them. They defame and libel dully; always betraying, like the slaves, like the hybrids that have in their veins servile blood. We must tremble when they smile: they are testing the grip of some occult stylet under their cloak.

The hypocrite cools off all friendship with their duplicity: nobody can trust their recalcitrant ambiguity. Day by day the interconnection with those around them loosen up and their affectivity pales like a plant that does not receive sunlight, forcing the heart to a premature winter. Only thinks about himself, and that is his supreme misery. His feelings wilt in the greenhouses of lies and vanity. While the dignified characters grow in perpetual oblivion of their past and think in noble things for tomorrow, the hypocrites retract over themselves, without spending their selves, getting back into the sheathe, atrophying. Their lack of intimacy impedes them all expansion, obsessed by the fear that their moral conscience peeks at the surface. They know that a slight breeze would suffice to draw aside their tenuous veil of virtue. Not able to trust anybody, they live blinding and suffocating the fountains of their own heart: they don't feel the race, the homeland, the class, the family, nor friendship, although they know how to lie to exploit them better. Foreign to everything and everyone, they lose the feeling of social solidarity, until they fall in sordid caricatures of selfishness. The hypocrite measures his generosity by the advantages that he attains by it; envisaging beneficence as a lucrative industry for their reputation. Before giving, they investigate if their donation will have notoriety; appearing in the first line in all the public subscriptions, but they would not open their hand in the shadows. Investing their money in a charity bazaar, as if he were to buy stock in a company; which does not prevent him from exercising usury in private or to take advantage of other's hunger.

Their indifference to their neighbor's bad fortunes may drag them to unworthy complicities. To satisfy some of their appetites they would not vacillate before gray intrigues, without worrying if they could have unforeseen consequences. One word from the hypocrite suffices to generate animosity among two friends or to put distance between two lovers. Their weapons are powerful because they are invisible; a false suspicion may poison happiness, destroy harmony and break a concordance of hearts. Their addiction to lies makes them accept benevolently any infamy, unwrapping it endlessly, underground, without seeing the course, nor measuring how deep, as irresponsible as vermins and moles digging their dens at random, severing the most delicate flowers' roots.

Unfit for others' trust, the hypocrite lives distrusting everyone, until they fall in the supreme misfortune of susceptibility. An anxious terror

frightens them before the sincere men, believing that in every word there is a deserved reproach; there is no dignity in this, but remorse. In vain would he pretend to fool himself, confusing susceptibility with delicacy and finesse; the former is born from fear and the later the daughter of pride.

Differing like cowardice from prudence and cynicism from sincerity. The hypocrite's distrust is a caricature of the delicacy of the proud-hearted man. This feeling can turn the man of excellent merits prickly, every time he disdains dignities whose price is subservience and whose road is adulation; the dignified man demands respect for that moral value that does not display by the vulgar modes of the sterile protest, for this reason, he sets them apart forever from the domesticated hypocrites. The case is rare. All too common is, instead, the susceptibility of the hypocrite, who fears finding himself unmasked by the sincere men.

It would be strange for him to keep that sensitivity, only survivor to the shipwreck of the others. The habit of feigning is incompatible with those tones of pride; lies are opaque to all radiance of dignity. The conduct of the Tartuffes cannot be kept adamantine; the misleading records become shackled until they choke the last scruples. By dint of asking others for their prejudices, morally borrowing from society, they lose the fear to ask for other favors and material goods, forgetting that the debts awkwardly accumulated enslave the man. Each loan not returned is a new link riveted to his chain; it becomes impossible to live worthily in a city where there are streets they cannot cross and among people whose glance they could not bear up. Lie and the hypocrisy converge on those renunciations, robbing man of his independence. The debts acquired due to vanity or for vice oblige to feign and deceit; the one who accumulates them renounces to all dignity.

There are other consequences of Tartuffism. The man prone to intrigue deprives himself of genuine affection. Usually has accomplices, but not friends; hypocrisy does not bind through the heart but by interest. The Hypocrites, necessarily utilitarian and opportunistic, are always ready to betray their principles in homage to an immediate benefit; that bans their friendship with superior spirits. The gentleman always has an enemy in them, because the reciprocity of sentiments is only possible among equals; he can never give in to their friendship, because they will find the occasion to affront him with some infamy, avenging their own inferiority. La Bruyere

wrote an immortal sentence: “In selfless friendship there are pleasures unreachable to the ones born mediocre”; these need accomplices, searching among the ones who know those secret springs described as a simple solidarity in evil. The sincere man gives himself, they await the right time to betray him; for this reason, friendship is not easy for the great spirits and they do not lavish their intimacy when they rise too much over the common level. The eminent men need to have infinite sensitivity and tolerance to give themselves; when they do it, nothing limits their tenderness and devotion. Among noble characters friendship grows slowly and prospers better when it is rooted in the reciprocal recognition of merits; among the vulgar men, it grows without motivation, remaining weak, frequently founded on the complicity of vice or intrigue. For this reason politics can create accomplices, but never friends; it often leads to exchanging the latter for the former, forgetting that exchanging them frequently implies not having them. While among the hypocrites' complicities die with the interest that determines them, in the loyal characters friendship lasts as long as the merits inspiring it.

Being disloyal, the hypocrite is also ungrateful, inverting the formulas of recognition: aspires to the disclosure of the favors he does but is insensible to the favors he receives. Multiplies for a thousand what he gives and divides for a million what he accepts. Ignores gratitude – virtue of the select few-, unbreakable chain riveted forever in the sensitive hearts by the ones who know how to give at the proper time, closing their eyes. Sometimes they are thankless without knowing it, a simple mistake of their sentimental accounting. To avoid others’ ingratitude, the hypocrite limits himself to not do good deeds: fulfilling his decision without effort, limited to practice their ostensible forms, in the proportion that may be convenient to their shadows. Their feelings are others: the hypocrite knows that he may continue being honest despite practicing evil with slyness and dissimulation and ingratitude with abandon.

Tartuffe’s psychology would be incomplete if we were to forget that he places in the most hermetic of his tabernacles all that announces blooming of passions inherent to the human condition. Faced with instinctive modesty, chaste by definition, the hypocrites have organized a conventional modesty, unchaste and corrosive. The capability of love, whose effervescences sanctify life itself, eternizing it, seems to them unspeakable,

as if the contact of two lover's mouths were less natural than the sun's kiss igniting the flowers' corollas. They keep anything concerning love hidden and mysterious as if converting it in a misdeed did not spur the innocent's temptation, but that visible modesty does not forbid them to invisibly rehearse the rudest abjections. Horrified by passion without renouncing vice, limiting themselves to disguise or hide it. Finding that evil is not in the things themselves, but in the appearances, developing a moral for himself and a different one for others, like those married women who presume of being honest even if they have three lovers and repudiate the maiden who only loves one man without having a husband.

This rugged hypocrisy's frontier has no limits. Jealous censors of customs, they pursue the purest exhibitions of artistic beauty. They would place a vine's leaf in the hand of the Medicean Venus, as in the past they damaged paintings and statues to veil the most divine nudities of Greece and the Renaissance. They confuse the most cast harmony of plastic beauty with the obscene intention that assails them when contemplating those works of art. They do not realize that the perversity is always in them, never in the works of art. The modesty of the hypocrites is the wig of their moral baldness.

II- THE HONEST MAN

The moral mediocrity is impotence for virtue and cowardice for vice. If there are minds that seem mannequins articulated with routines, abound hearts full of prejudices. The honest man may fear crime without admiring sanctity: is incapable of initiative for both. The grip of the past clutches their heart, squeezing all desire of future perfection. Their prejudices are the archeological documents of the social psychology: residues of crepuscular virtues, survivals of extinguished morals.

The mediocracies of all times are enemies of the virtuous men: they prefer the honest man and raise him as example. There is in this an implicit error or lie that is best to dissipate. One can be honest without feeling a burning desire for perfection; it is plenty something not to display evil, but this is not sufficient to be virtuous. Between a vice and virtue, fluctuates honesty.

Virtue elevates beyond the ordinary moral; implies some aristocracy of heart, proper to moral talent; the virtuous man anticipates himself to a form of future perfection and sacrifices the automatisms consolidated by habit. The honest man, instead, is passive, circumstance that assigns him a moral level superior to the vicious man, although it remains below the one who actively practices virtue and orients his life towards an ideal. Limiting himself to respect the prejudices that choke him, measures moral with the double ruler used by his peers, to whose fractions the inferior tendencies of fools and the conspicuous aspirations of the virtuous men are irreducible. If they could not assimilate the prejudices, becoming saturated, society would punish him with as felon for his dishonest conduct: if he could overcome the limitations, his moral talent would deepen the grooves, worth imitating. While not raising a scandal nor serving as an example, mediocrity is manifested.

The honest man can practice actions whose indignity he suspects, every time he feels constrained to it by the force of the prejudices, which are the obstacles with which the acquired habits disturb de new variations. The acts that are already bad in the original judgment of the virtuous man, may continue to be good before the collective opinion. The superior man practices virtue as he judges it, avoiding the prejudices that yoke the honest mass; to feel with other's heart is to think with other's head.

Virtue usually is a bold gesture, like everything that is original; honesty is a uniform that is worn resignedly. The mediocre man fears the public opinion with the same obsequiousness with which the featherbrained person fears hell; never has the courage to oppose it and even less when the appearance of vice is an implicit danger in all misunderstood virtue, renouncing it because of the necessary sacrifices.

The mediocre man forgets that there is no perfection without effort: only the ones who dare stare at the sun without fearing blindness can look at the sun straight on. The dwindling and lesser hearts can't harvest roses in their orchard, fearing the thorns; the virtuous know that it is necessary to risk the thorns to gather the best flowers.

The honest is enemy of the saint, like the routine man is to the genius; calling him "crazy" and judging the other "amoral". And explains himself: measuring them with his own yardstick, in which they do not fit. In their

dictionary, “sanity and moral” are the names that he reserves for his own qualities. For his shadowy moral, the hypocrite is honest; the virtuous and the saint that exceeds them appear to him as “immoral”, and with this qualification covertly ascribe to them some immorality…

Shoddy men, you would think them made with odds and ends of catechism and with leftovers of shame: the first offerer can purchase them at a low price. Frequently, they remain honest for convenience; sometimes for simplicity, if the itch of temptation does not disturb his foolishness. They teach that it is necessary to be like others; ignoring that only is virtuous the one who yearns to be the best. When they tell us close up to the ear to renounce the dreams and to imitate the herd, they lack the courage to straightly advise the apostasy of our ideals, mandating we sit to ruminate the collective pastures.

Society preaches: “do no wrong and you will be honest”. The moral talent has other demands: “pursue a perfection and you will be virtuous”. Honesty is within reach for all; virtue belongs to a select few. The honest man endures the yoke to which his accomplices subject him; the virtuous man soars above them with a strike of his wings.

Honesty is an industry; virtue excludes the calculation. There is no difference between the coward that moderates his actions fearing punishment and the greedy who activates them hoping for a reward; both carry their current account in double entry with the social prejudices. The one who shivers before danger or pursues a prebend is unfit of naming virtue: for this, they risk proscription or misery. We won’t say that the virtuous is infallible. But virtue implies a capacity of spontaneous rectifications, the loyal acknowledgment of one’s mistakes as a lesson for one-self and for others, the firm rectitude of the ulterior conduct. The one who pays a fault with many years of virtue is as if he had not sinned; is purified. The mediocre, instead, does not acknowledge his mistakes nor is ashamed of them, aggravating them with indecency, underlying them with their repetition, duplicating them with the exploitation of the results.

To preach honesty would be excellent if it weren’t a renouncement to virtue, whose north is incessant perfection. Its praise tarnishes the cult to dignity and is the safest proof of the moral decline of a people. Raising the interlope is an affront to the severe; the exemplary is forgotten for the

tolerable. The accommodating spirits come to hate firmness and loyalty by dint of dealing with servility and hypocrisy.

To admire the honest man is to cringe and belittle oneself; adoring him is to lower oneself. Stendhal reduced honesty to a simple form of fear; we should add that it is not fear of evil in itself, but to others' reprobation; for this reason it is compatible with a total absence of scruples for all acts that don't have an express sanction or that may remain ignored. J'ai vu le fond de ce qu'on appellee les honnetes gens: c'est hideux, (I saw the bottom of what it called honest people: it is hideous), said Talleyrand, asking himself what would happen to such subjects if interest and passion came into play. Their fear of vice and their impotence for virtue are equivalent. They are simple beneficiaries of the moral mediocrity that surrounds them. They aren't assassins, but they are not heroes; don't rob, but do not give half a cape to the underdog; they do not rape virgins, but do not redeem falls; do not conspire against society, but don't cooperate to the common greatness.

Against the hypocritical honesty –proper of routine minds and domesticated characters -, there exists a moral heraldry whose crests are virtue and sanity. It is the antithesis of the timid obsequiousness to the prejudices that paralyzes the heart of vulgar temperaments and that degenerates in that apotheosis of emotional coldness that characterizes the irruption of all bourgeoisies. Virtue wants faith, enthusiasm, passion, courage: it lives of them. It wants them in intention and works. There is no virtue when the actions belie the words, nor nobility where the intention creeps and drags along. This is why moral mediocrity is more harmful in conspicuous men and in the privileged classes. The wise man who betrays his truth, the philosopher who lives outside his moral and the noble who dishonors his cradle, descend to the most ignominious of villainies; they are less excusable and forgivable than the rogue man depraved and muddied up in misdeeds. The privileges of the culture and birth impose to whom enjoys them an exemplar loyalty to himself. It is useless for the nobility that is not in our eagerness of perfection to last in ridiculous lineages and scrolls; noble is the one who reveals in his actions a respect for his rank and not the one who claims his lineage to justify ignoble acts. The moral aristocracy's values are measured by the virtue, never by the honesty.

III- THE TRAITORS AND DESERTERS OF HONESTY

While the hypocrite prowls about in the shadows, the moral invalid seeks refuge in the darkness. Vice thrives in the twilight, sheltered by mediocrity; in the night, crime irrupts which is repressed by laws forged by society. From consented hypocrisy to punished felony, the transition is insensible; the night incubates in the dusk. From conventional honesty to infamy the progression is gradual, through slight nuances and subtle concessions. There lies the danger of vacillating and faltering conduct.

The moral's traitors are rebels to domestication; despising Tartuffe's prudent cowardice. They ignore his balancing acts, do not know to simulate, assaulting the enshrined principles; and as society cannot tolerate them without compromising its own existence, they tend their guerrillas against that same order whose custody obsesses the mediocre men.

Compared to the moral invalid, the honest man appears to be a jewel. This distinction is necessary; we must make it in his favor, certain that he will repute it honorably. He is incapable of ideals, but also of overt crime; knows how to disguise his instincts, cloaking vices and avoiding felonies punished by laws. In the others, instead, all perversity bubbles up to the surface, like a pustular eruption; incapable of sustaining themselves in the hypocrisy, like the idiots are unable to embrace routine. The honest men make an effort to deserve the purgatory; the felons have decided to march into hell charging without scruples nor remorse against the carcass of prejudices and laws that society opposes them.

Each human aggregation believes that "the" true moral is "his" moral, forgetting that there are as many as human's herds. You can be infamous, vicious, honest or virtuous, in time and space. Each "moral" is an opportune and conventional measure of the actions that constitute the human conduct; it does not have esoteric existence, and neither would have it "society", abstractly considered.

Their canons are relative and transform obeying the tangled determinism of social evolution. In every environment and in every age there exists an average judgment or standard that sanctions as good or bad, honest or criminal, allowed or forbidden, the individual actions that are useful or dangerous to collective life. In each historic moment this criterion is the substructure of moral, always variable.

The malfeasants are individuals incapable of adapting their conduct to the average morality of the society in which they live. They are inferior; they have the “soul of the species”, but do not acquire the “social soul”. They diverge from mediocrity, but in the opposite direction to the excellent men, whose original variations determine an evolutionary maladaptation in the sense of perfection.

They are innumerable. All the corrosive forms of degeneration parade in that kaleidoscope, as if conjuring a malefic exorcism able to transform the most sordid cycles of Dante’s inferno in dreadful reality; parasites of the social scum, bordering on infamy, commensals of vice and dishonesty. Sad individuals spurred by abnormal sentiments, spirits that endure the fatality of sickly heritage and suffer the inexorable corrosion of prevailing miseries.

Irreducible and untamable, they accept as a permanent duel life in society. They pass by our side undaunted and somber, carrying over their fugitive foreheads the stigma of their involuntary destiny and in their silent lips, the oblique grin of those who scrutinize their peers with the gaze of the enemy. They seem to ignore that they are the victims of a complex determinism, superior to all ethical restraint; other imbalances are tacked on, lent by a sickly heritage, deformed moral configurations embodied in the social media and the thousand unavoidable circumstances that randomly are encountered through their existence. Their conduct swims in a swamp, choking the germs capable of any moral sense, separating the last prejudices that link them to the solidary consortium of the mediocre men. They live adapted to a separate moral, with panoramas of shadowy perspectives, avoiding the shiny openings of the canopy of clouds and scurrying away in between the densest shadows; fermenting in the agitated bewilderment of the big modern cities, sprouting in all the cracks of the social edifice and sordidly conspiring against their stability, alien to the characteristic norms of conduct of the mediocre man, eminently conservative and disciplined. The imagination allows us to align their grim silhouettes over a distant horizon where the crepuscular gloom offers violent hues of gold and purple, of fire and hemorrhage: parade of macabre legion that clumsily marches towards ignominy and disgrace.

In that abnormal pleiad culminate the ones borderline with crime, whose virulence grows due to their impunity before the law. Their lackluster moral sense prevents them from maintaining a clean conduct,

without becoming, for this reason, complete felons: they are the imbeciles of honesty, different from the moral idiots that roll to jail. They are not felons, but they are incapable of keeping themselves honest; poor spirits of failing character and weak will, who do not know how to place safe hurdles to the occasional factors, to the medium's suggestions, to the temptation of easy profit, to imitative contagion. They live solicited by opposing tendencies, oscillating between good and evil, like Buridan's ass. They are characters conformed minute by minute in the unstable mold of circumstances. Sometimes permanent assistants of vice and misdeeds, other times causing half offences by their incapacity to execute a complete plan of antisocial conduct, and yet other times they have sufficient shrewdness and foresight to reach the edge of the madhouse and jail, without falling in. These subjects of incomplete morality, accidental or alternating, represent the transition stages between honesty and crime, the zone of interference between good and evil, socially considered. They lack the opportunism that saves other mediocre men from their shipwrecks.

An irrevocable stigma keeps them from shaping their sentiments to the moral standards of their society. In some, it is the result of their native temperament; populating jails and living as enemies within the society that houses them. In many, the moral degeneration is acquired, fruit of their education; in some cases derives from the fight for life in a social environment unmatched to their effort; disorganized mediocre men, randomly fallen in the swamp, able to understand their misfortune and ashamed of it like the wild beast that has missed the mortal jump. In others, there is an inversion of the ethical values, a perturbation of judgment that prevents measuring good and evil with the proper yardstick accepted by society: they are moral inverts, inept and unable to estimate honesty and vice. Finally, there are unstable souls, whose character reveals a lack of solid foundations that can fasten them against the oscillating forces of profit, material needs and the unsettling alternative of dishonest temptations. Those invalids do not feel the social coercion; their inferior morality borders with vice till the moment it runs aground in crime.

These inadaptable men are morally inferior to the mediocre man. Their hues are varied: they act in society as those harmful insects in nature.

The flock fears those violators of its hypocrisy. The prudent men do not forgive them the shamelessness of their infamy and organize against them a

complex defensive structure of codes, judges and prestige; through the centuries, their effort has been ineffective. They constitute a foreign and hostile horde within their own land, bold in their ambush, cloaked by the procedure, indefatigable in the treacherous processing of their tragic programs. Some trust their vanity to the edge of the surreptitious knife, always alert to promptly brandish it against the heart of the back; others furtively slide their agile claw over the gold or gems which stimulate their greed with irresistible seductions; these ones violate, like childish toys, the obstacles with which the bourgeois' prudence custody the treasure accumulated over endless phases of thrift and sacrifice; those denigrate innocent virgins to profit, offering the enchantments of their sensual bodies to the insatiable lust of sensuous and libertines; lots of them suction misery's core, in incredible arithmetic of usury, like solitary tapeworms that nourish their inextinguishable voracity in the ichorous juices of the sickened social intestine, others capture inexperienced consciences to exploit the rich veins of ignorance and fatalism. All are equivalent carrying out their parasitic antisocial function, identical in the maladaptation of their most elemental sentiments. Converging in them inveterate promiscuous instincts and perversions that make of every conscience a pustule, dragging them to live of vice and misdeeds.

Whatever it were however, the orientation of their biological or moral inferiority, we find a common brush in all men who find themselves under the level of mediocrity: the constant ineptitude to adapt to the conditions that in each human collectivity, limit the fight for life. They lack the aptitude that allows the mediocre man to imitate the prejudices and hypocrisies of the society in which he vegetates.

IV- VIRTUE'S SOCIAL FUNCTION

Honesty is an imitation; virtue is originality. Only the virtuous possess moral talent and belongs to them any ascent towards perfection; the flock limits itself to following their footprints, incorporating to the trivial honesty what was once virtue of the few and always debasing it.

We have distinguished the offender from the honest. We insist that honesty is not the virtue; he strives to confuse them, knowing that the latter is inaccessible to him. Virtue is another thing. It is active; infinitely exceeds

in variety, in straightness, in courage, the routine practices that free from infamy or jail.

To be honest implies to be oneself in front of the ordinary conventions; to be virtuous frequently signifies to go against them, becoming exposed to be perceived as enemy of all moral when in reality one is only against some inferior prejudices. If the serene Athenian would have flattered his fellow-country men, the Helenic history would not be stained by his conviction and the wise man would not have drunk the hemlock; but he would not be Socrates. His virtue was to resist others' prejudices. If we could live among worthy and saint men, other's opinion could help us avoid tripping and falling; but it would be cowardice, living among impostors, abasing oneself to the common level for fear to attract their anger. To do as everyone may imply reconciling to the worthless and unfit; moral progress has as condition to resist the ordinary rest and get ahead of its time like any other progress.

If there were an eternal moral –and not as many morals as there are peoples- we could take the biblical legend of the tree loaded with fruits of good and evil seriously. We would only have two types of men: good and evil, honest and dishonest, normal and inferior, moral and immoral. But it is not like that. Value judgments change: the good of today may have been the evil of yesterday, the evil of today may become the good of tomorrow. And vice versa.

It is not the man morally mediocre – the honest- who determines the moral's transformations. But the virtuous and saints are unmistaken with the honest but morally inferior men. Precursors, apostles, martyrs, invent superior forms of good, teach them, preach them and impose them. All future moral is a product of individual efforts, work of excellent characters that conceive and practice perfections inaccessible to the common man. Therein lays the moral talent, forging virtue and the moral genius that implies sanctity. Without these original men the transformation of customs could not be conceived: we would keep the sentiments and passions of the primitive human beings. Every moral ascent is an effort of the virtuous talent towards future perfection; never inert condescension with the past, nor simple accommodation to the present.

Virtue's evolution depends on all the moral and intellectual factors. The brain tends to anticipate the heart, but our sentiments influence the formation of our moral criteria more intensely than our ideas. This fact is more notorious in societies than in individuals. It has been said that if a Greek or Roman resuscitated today, his brain would be stunned and aghast by our intellectual culture, but his heart could beat in unison with many contemporary hearts. Their ideas about the universe, man and things would contrast with ours, but their sentiments would adjust in great measure to the palpitations of modern sentiment. In one century the fundamental ideas of science and philosophy change: the central sentiments of the collective moral suffer just minor oscillations, because the biological attributes of the human species change slowly. The childish knowledge of the classics force us to smile, but their feelings move us, their virtues enthuse us, their heroes are admired and appear honorable by the same attributes that today would make them respect them. Then, as now, the exemplar men, albeit of opposing ideas, practiced analogous virtues when facing the hypocrites of their time. The background varies little; what incessantly transmutes is the form, the value judgment that provides it with ethical strength.

There is, however, a collective moral progress. Lots of dogmatisms, that were virtues in the past, are judged later as prejudices. In each historical moment, virtues and prejudices coexist; moral talent practices the former; honesty grabs the latter. The great virtuous men, each in their own manner, fight for the same thing, in the way that their culture and temperament suggests. Although through different roads, and starting out from antagonistic rational premises, all propose to better mankind: they are equally enemies of the vices of their time.

The virtuous men do not match the saints; society pits too many obstacles to their efforts. To think perfection does not imply to practice it entirely; suffices the firm commitment to march towards it. The ones who think like prophets may find themselves obligated to proceed like philistines in many of their acts. Virtue is a real tension towards what we conceive as an ideal perfection.

Ethical progress is slow, but certain. Virtue drags and teaches; the honest men resign themselves to imitate some part of the excellences practiced by the virtuous men. When it is asserted that we are better than our grandparents, it means that we are better before the contemporary

moral. It would be more exact to say that we differ from them. Concepts of perfection about the perennial necessities of the species become organized and change over time and over the transient necessities of each society, the most useful model of virtue to its progress is elaborated. While the absolute ideal remains undefined and offers few oscillations over the course of entire centuries, the concrete concept of virtues takes shape in the real variations of social life; the virtuous men ascend through a thousand paths towards the summits that move away, constantly, towards infinity.

Each of the useful sentiments for human life engenders a virtue, a form of moral talent. There are philosophers who meditate over long sleepless nights, wise men who sacrifice their lives in laboratories, patriots who die for the liberty of their country fellow men, haughty and proud men who renounce all favors whose price could be their dignity, mothers who suffer misery guarding their children's honor. The mediocre man ignores those virtues; he limits himself to following the laws for fear of the hardships which threaten who violates them, keeping their honor to avoid dragging the consequences of losing it.

V- THE SMALL VIRTUE AND THE MORAL TALENT

Just as there is a gamut of intellects, whose fundamental hues are the inferiority, mediocrity and talent – besides idiotism and genius, which occupy the extremes-, there is also a moral hierarchy represented by equivalent terms. In the bottom of those inequalities there is a profound heterogeneity of temperaments. The conformation to others' catechisms and doctrines is easy for weak, credulous and timid men, without great wishes, without vehement passions, without necessity of independence, without irradiation of their personality; it is inconceivable, instead, in the idealistic and strong natures, capable of live passions, sufficiently intellectual to not be deceived by the lives of others. The former do not suffer by the moral coaction of the flock, because hypocrisy is their favorable climate; the latter suffer, fighting between their natural higher inclinations and the distorted sense of duty imposed by society. The honest men conform themselves, but the man morally superior is beyond enslaving. "They may adopt" – as per Remy de Gourmont – "the value of a fashion to which they resign themselves to avoid drawing attention, but without engaging the intimate part of their delicate soul and without deep sacrifice". In that disconformity

with the organized collective hypocrisy consists the virtue, which is individual, as opposed to the collective caricatures: in charity and mundane beneficence the misery of the sad hearts feeds the vanity of empty brains.

The temperaments capable of virtue differ by their intensity. The first seed of moral perfection is manifested in a decided preference for good: Doing it, teaching it, admiring it. Kindness is the first effort towards virtue; the good man, shy of the complaisance permitted by the hypocrites, carries within, a speck of sainthood. "Goodness" is the moral of the small virtuosi; their preaching is plausible if they teach to avoid cowardice, which is their peril. Some excesses of kindness could not be distinguished from vilification; there is lack of justice in the moral of systematic pardon. It is good to forgive once and it would be wicked and iniquitous not to forgive at all, but he who pardons twice becomes an accomplice of the wicked. We don't know what Christ would have done if his second cheek had been slapped after offering his first: the scholastics prefer not to discuss this matter.

Let's teach to forgive; but also teach not to offend. It would be more efficient. Let's teach it by example and not offending. Let's admit that the first time we can offend by ignorance, but let's believe that the second time is usually by villainy. Evil is not corrected with complaisance or complicity; it is noxious-like poison and must be treated with efficacious antidotes: reprobation and contempt.

While the hypocrites prescribe austerity, reserving indulgence for themselves, the small virtuosi prefer practicing good instead of preaching it; they avoid sermons and exalt their own conduct. For the neighbor they find an apology, in human weakness or in the temptation of the environment: "Tout comprendre c'est tout pardoner" (To understand everything is to forgive everything); they are only severe with themselves. They never forget their own blames and mistakes; if they don't justify other's mistakes, they don't worry about harassing them with their hatred, because they know that time chastises them severely, for that gravitation that threatens the perverse as if they were deflated balloons. Their heart is sensitive to others' pulsations, opening up at any time to adduce the sorrows of an hapless man and foreseeing their needs to spare them the humiliation of asking for help: they always do all they can, placing in it such effort that reveals the desire to do more and better. Approve and stimulate any seedling of culture,

lavishing their applause to all original ideas and pitying the ignorants without ill-timed reproach: Their sincere cordiality with the humble spirits is not corroded by the conventional urbanity.

These small virtues are common, of frequent and daily use; useful to distinguish the good man from the mediocre and differ so much from honesty as the good sense differs from the common sense. They amount to an elevation over mediocrity; the ones who know how to practice them deserve the praise that is lavishly offered. Since Plato and Plutarch the apology is completed; which does not limit the frequent reiteration by writers that gloss in less decisive style the handy Victor Hugo's phrase: Il se fait beaucoup de grands actions dans les petites lutes. Il y a des bravoures opinia tres et ignores qui se defendant pied a pied dans l'ombre contre l'envahissement fatal des neccessites. Noble et misterieux triomphe qu'aucun regard ne voit, qu'aucune renommee ne paye, qu'aucune fanfare ne salue. La vie, le malheur, l'isolement, l'abandon, la pauvrete, sont des champs de bataille que ont leurs heros; heros obscurs plus grands parfois que les heros illustres." (There are many great deeds in small struggles. There are many obstinate and ignored audacities that are furiously defended in the shadows against the fatal invasion of necessities. Noble and mysterious triumph that no eye sees, no fame pays and no fanfare greets. Life, misfortune, isolation, abandonment, poverty, are battlefields that have their heroes; obscure heroes sometimes greater than the illustrious ones.").

Let's not forget, however, that these virtues are small; it is grave error to oppose them to the great ones. They reveal a laudable tendency, but cannot be compared with the assiduous zeal of perfection that transforms kindness in virtue. For this, certain superior intellectuality is required; the meager minds cannot conceive a transcendental and noble gesture, as an amorphous character would not know how to execute them. To those who say: "there is no silly individual who is bad", we could answer that the incapacity to cause harm is not goodness or bonhomie. The age old dispute that proposed to choose between a good imbecile and an evil intelligent remains to be resolved; but it is surely resolved that imbecility is not a presumption of virtue, nor intelligence of perversity. Which does not keep the fool from protesting against genius and illustration, glossing Rousseau's paradox, till inferring from it that the schools populate the jails and that the good men are the clumsy and ignorant. False. Old wives' tale wielded

against human dignity through public instruction, basic requisite for moral exaltation.

Socrates taught – a few years back – that science and virtue become one and the same: Wisdom. To do good, it is sufficient to see it clearly; it is not done accidentally by those without foresight; nobody would be evil knowing it. The most intelligent and knowledgeable man can be the better one; he could be the good one, but it is not always a fact. The clumsy and ignorant, instead, could never be or become, irremissibly.

Morality is as important as intelligence in the global composition of character. The greatest spirits are the ones that link the intellectual lights' with the heart's magnificence. The "greatness of soul" is bilateral. Complete talents are rare; geniuses are exceptional. The excellent men shine for this or that aptitude, without glowing in all of them; likewise, there are talents in some intellectual genre, that do not possess them in any virtue, and virtuous men that do not impress others by their intellectual gifts.

Both forms of talent, although different and each one multiform, are equally necessary and deserve the same homage. They can be observed isolated; they tend to germinate at once in extraordinary men. Isolated they are worthless. Virtue is inconceivable in imbeciles and inventiveness is sterile in the shameless men. The subordination of morality to intelligence is a renouncement of all dignity; the most ingenious of all men would be detestable if he place his wits to serve routine, prejudice or servility; his triumphs would be his shame and not his glory. It is for this reason that Cicero, long ago said: "the more fine and cult is a man, the more repulsive and suspicious he becomes if he loses his reputation of honesty." (De offic., II, 9). It is true that time forgives some faults to geniuses and heroes, capable of surpassing with the good they do the evil they did not complete; but they are rare exceptions and in life we would have to weigh them with posterity's criteria: the transcendental magnitude of their life work.

These notions eliminate some innocent problems, like deciding if the preferable men are the ones who create, invent and perfect sciences and arts or the ones who possess an admirable set of moral energies that propel them to risk their future and their life to defend dignity and justice. Between the intellectual and the moral talents, the latter ones are usually preferred and with reason, felt to be more necessary. Smiles has written: "The superior

talent is the moral talent", glossing the inexhaustible Monsieur de la Palisse. The Mediocre Man is excluded from this comparison "a priori", since he only has routines in his brain and prejudices in his heart.

The apotheosis of the good imbecile, evidently leads to protesting, as Cicero used to do, against the ones who pretend to indulge the wit with an absurd right to immorality. The system is equivocal; it would be equally unjust to discredit the most exemplar saints on the excuse that there exist simulators of virtue.

It is captious to oppose ingenuity and moral as irreconcilable. Could only the man captured by routine or the imbecile be virtuous? Could only the dishonest or degenerate man be ingenious? Humanity should blush before those questions. Nevertheless, those questions are insinuated by catechists who adulate fools, seeking success in their infinite number. The sophism is simple. Of many great men there are tales of moral anomalies or weaknesses of character, which usually are not told of the mediocre or imbecile men; then, those are immoral and these are virtuous.

Even if the premises were exact, the conclusion would be illegitimate. If it were conceded – and it is false – that the great ingenious men are immoral, there would be no reason to grant the imbeciles the privilege of virtue, reserved to moral talent.

But the premise is false. If the tales of the imbalance of the geniuses and not of the fools are told, is not because these are beacons of virtue, but for a very simple reason: History occupies itself only with the former and ignores the latter. For every alcoholic poet there are ten million dandies who drink like him; for every uxoricide philosopher there are one hundred thousand uxoricides who are not philosophers; for every experimenter sage, cruel with a dog or a frog, there are innumerable hunters that surpass him in impiety. And what would History say? There was an alcoholic poet, an uxoricide philosopher and a cruel sage: the anonymous millions do not have a biography. Moreau de Tours took the wrong course; Lombroso got lost; Nordau made of the issue a simple literary controversy. Let's not commune with a millstone; the premise is wrong. The ones who have visited one hundred jails are certain that there were in them fifty thousand men of inferior intelligence, along with five to twenty men of talent. Not a single man of genius.

Let's return to the health Socratic concept, twinning virtue and wit, allies rather than adversaries. An elevated intelligence is always conducive to moral talent and this is the very condition of virtue. There is only one thing more vast, exemplar, magnificent, the stroke of wings that elevates towards what was till then unknown, transporting us towards the eternal summits of that moral aristocracy: they are the geniuses that teach virtues not practiced till the time of their prophecies or that practice the known virtues with extraordinary intensity. If a man gets his life in the right track towards an ideal, avoiding or acknowledging the material contingencies conspiring against him, that man rises above the very level of the loftiest virtues. He enters into sanctity.

VI- MORAL GENIUS: SANCTITY

Sanctity exists: The moral geniuses are Humanity's saints. The evolution of collective sentiments, represented by the concepts of good and virtue, takes place through extraordinary men, in whom some immanent tendencies from the continuous moral progress are summarized or polarized. Some of them organize and found religions, like Manu, Confucius, Moses and Buda in primitive civilizations, when the States are theocracies; others preach and live their moral, like Socrates, Zeno or Christ, trusting the fortunes of their new values to the efficacy of their example; finally, there are others that rationally transmute the doctrines, like Antisthenes, Epicurus or Spinoza. Whatever the judgment that their teachings deserved in posterity, all of them are inventors, original forces in the evolution of good and evil, in the metamorphosis of virtues. The ones who teach them are always men of exception, geniuses. The moral talents perfect or practice in excellent manner those virtues by them created; the moral mediocre men limit themselves to imitate them shyly.

All sanctity is excessive, overflowing, obsessive, obedient, incontrastable: is genius. Saints become so by temperament and not by calculation, by firm hunches more than for rational doctrinarism: They were almost all like that. The prophet's or apostle's inflexible stiffness and rigidity is symbolic, without it, we could not have the virtuous' illuminated firmness nor the disciplined obedience of the honest man. Saints are not the practical factors of social life, but the masses that weakly imitate their

formula. Francisco was not an effective instrument of beneficence, Christian virtue that time will replace for social solidarity: their useful effects are the result of innumerable individuals who would be incapable of practicing by self-initiative but who receive suggestions, tendencies and examples from the exalted archetype, graduating and promulgating them. The Saint of Assisi dies of consumption, obsessed by his virtue, without caring for himself and giving his life to his ideal; the mediocre men who exercise the beneficence practiced by him, fulfill an obligation, tepidly, luke-warmly without perturbing their tranquility in holocaust to others.

Sanctity (holiness) creates or renews. "The extension and development of the social and moral sentiments" – said Ribot- "have been generated slowly and by virtue of certain men who deserve to be called moral inventors. This expression may sound strange to certain ears of people imbued of the hypothesis of innate knowledge of good and evil, universal, distributed to all men and at all times. If instead, we admit a moral that is dynamic, that is in the making, it is necessary for it to be the creation, the discovery of an individual or a group. Everybody admits inventors in geometry, in music, in the plastic or mechanical arts; but there have also been men that for their natural dispositions were superior to their contemporaries and have become promoters, pioneers. It is important to observe that the theoretical conception of a loftier moral ideal, of a hurdle to surpass, is not enough; a powerful emotion that propels action and by contagion demonstrates to others its own ardor or "élan" is necessary. The advance is proportional to what one feels and not to what one thinks."

For this reason, the moral genius is incomplete while it does not act; the simple vision of splendid ideals does not imply sanctity, it is in the example more than in the doctrine, always involving original creation. The "certificated" saints of certain religions rarely are creators; they are simple virtuous or hallucinated men, to whom the cult's interest and the ecclesiastical politics have attributed a nominal sanctity. In the history of religious sentiment, geniuses are only the ones who found or transmute, but not the ones who organize religious orders, who establish rules, who repeat a creed, practice a norm or spread a catechism. The catholic santoral is laughable. Next to few lives that deserve the hagiography of a Friar Domenico Cavalca, there are many that have no interest to moralist or psychologist; numerous tempt the curiosity of the alienists and others only

reveal the interested tribute of councils to localist fanaticism of some industrious herds.

Let's raise Holiness: wherever it signals an unmistakable orientation in the Moral History. Every hour of humanity has a climate, an atmosphere and a temperature that ceaselessly change. Each climate promotes blooming of certain virtues; each atmosphere is loaded with beliefs that point out their intellectual orientation; each temperature marks the degrees of faith with which certain ideals and aspirations are accentuated. A Humanity that evolves cannot have immutable ideals, but unceasingly perfectible ones, whose power of transformation is infinite as life. Past virtues are not today's virtues: the saints of tomorrow will not be yesterday's. Each moment of history requires certain form of holiness that would be sterile if it weren't opportune, as virtues are shaped by variations and changes of social life.

In the dawn of peoples, when men live grappling with the rod nature, it is essential to be strong and brave to impose the hegemony or ascertain the liberty of the group; then the supreme quality is the physical excellence and the virtue of courage becomes cult of heroes, compared to Gods. Sanctity is in heroism.

In great crisis of moral renewal, when apathy or decadence threaten to dissolve a nation or a race, the excellent virtue among all is integrity of character, which allows to live or die for a fecund ideal for the common exaltation and aggrandizement. Sanctity is in the apostolate.

In the plain civilizations, more serves Humanity the one who discovers a new law of nature or learns to dominate one of its forces, than the one who excels for his temperament of hero or apostle. For this reason prestige surrounds the intellectual virtues: Holiness is Wisdom.

The ethical ideals are not exclusive of religious sentiment; not for virtue nor holiness. They can bloom over each sentiment. Every time has its ideals and its saints: heroes, apostles or sages.

Nations that achieve certain level of education and culture, bless in their great thinkers the light bearers and heralds of their spiritual greatness. If the supreme example for the combatants is furnished by the heroes and for the believers by the apostles, for the ones who think is given by the philosophers. In the moral of the societies that develop, culminate

Alejandro, Caesar or Napoleon; and when renewed, Socrates, Christ or Bruno; but there comes a time in which the saints become Aristotle, Bacon, Goethe. Holiness varies in time and rhythm with the ideal.

The cult and educated spirits conceive holiness in the thinkers, as bright as in heroes and apostles; in modern societies the "saint" is an anticipated visionary of theory or prophet of deeds that posterity confirms, applies or realizes. It is understood that, there is holiness in serving an ideal in the battlefields or defying hypocrisy like in the supreme protagonists of an Iliad or of a Gospel; but also is "holy", of other ideals, the poet, the sage or the philosopher that live forever in their Divine Comedy, in their Novun Organum or in their Origin of the Species. If it is difficult to look for a moment the face of death that threatens to paralyze our arm, it is more so to resist a lifetime the principles and routines menacing to asphyxiate our intelligence.

Surrounded by fog that alternately thickens and dissipates, Humanity ascends restlessly to remote summits. Most humans ignore them. Few chosen ones can see them and placing their ideals and aspiring to approach them. Oriented by the meager constellation of visionaries, generations ascend from routine towards Truths every time less imprecise and inexact and from prejudice towards Virtues every time less imperfect. All holiness' paths lead to an infinity point that marks its imaginary convergence.

CHAPTER IV

THE MEDIOCRE CHARACTERS

I- MEN and SHADOWS

Devoid of wings and plumes, the mediocre characters are incapable of flying to the summit or to fighting against the herd. Their lives are in perpetual complicity with that of others. They become mercenary troops of the first firm and original man able to fasten them to their yoke. They go through the world worried about their shadow and ignoring their personality, never able to individualize themselves: Ignoring the pleasure of exclaiming “I am”, in front of others. They don’t exist alone. Their amorphous structure obligates them to dim out in a race, a people, a party, a sect or a banner: always smearing themselves with others. They shore up all the doctrines and prejudices, consolidated through centuries. Thus, they prosper. Following the path of least resistance, swimming downstream of every current and changing with them; there is no merit in floating downstream: simple incapacity of swimming upstream. They grow because they know how to adapt themselves to the social hypocrisy, like the tapeworms.

They are refractory to all dignified gesture; becoming hostile. Conquering “honors” reaching “dignities” in plural; they have invented the inconceivable plural of Honor and Dignity, which by definition are singular and inflexible. They live from others and for others: shadows whose existence is the accessory of bulbs which project them. They lack light, glow, valor, fire, emotion. All is in them, borrowed.

The excellent characters ascend to their own dignity swimming against all the uninspired currents, whose reflux and force they resist with tenacity. Next to the others, they are immediately recognized, never erased

by that moral fog in which the others dissipate. Their personality is all shine and edge:

"Firmness and light, like crystal rock",

Brief words that synthesize their perfect definition. Not done better by Theophrastus or de La Bruyere. They have created their life and served an Ideal, persevering in their path, feeling owners of their actions, annealing themselves by great efforts: confident in their beliefs, loyal to their affections, faithful to their word. They are neither obstinate in mistakes, nor ever able to betray the Truth. They ignore the shamelessness of fickleness and the insolence of ingratitude. They push against obstacles and face the difficulties. They are respectful in victory and dignified in defeat, as if for them the beauty were in the fight and not in its result. Always, invariably, gazing high and afar into the horizon; beyond the current and fleeting they distinguish an Ideal even more respectful, even if more distant. These optimists are few; each one live for a million. They possess a firm moral structure that serves as their skeleton or armor. They are somebody. Their physiognomy is their own and cannot belong to anybody else; they are unmistakable, able to imprint their indelible seal in a thousand fruitful initiatives. Domesticated people fear them, like sore fears the cautery; but without realizing, they adore them with their disdain. They are the real masters of society, the ones who assault the past and prepare the future, the ones who destroy and synthesize. They are the actors of the social drama, with boundless energy, possessing the gift of resistance to the routine and able to break free from its leveling tyranny. It is for them that Humanity lives and progresses. They are always excessive; multiplying the qualities that others possess in germinal form. The hypertrophy of an idea or a passion makes them unadaptable to their milieu, exaggerating their vigor; what is more, they accomplish a harmonic and vital function for society. Without them, human progress would come to a halt, like a sailboat tied to a post in the high seas. History and art are usually dedicated to them and are occupied with them, the archetypes of Humanity.

The man who thinks with his own head and the shadow that reflects others' thoughts seem to belong to different worlds. Men and Shadows: differing like crystal and clay. The crystal has a pre-established form in its own chemical composition; crystallizes in it or not, depending on the case; but it would never take another form but its own. Sighting it, we know what

it is, unmistakably. In the same manner, the superior man is always one, per se, apart from others. If the social climate is benevolent he becomes a core of social energies, projecting his own properties over the surrounding environment, in the same way a crystal triggers new similar crystallizations in a saturated solution, creating forms of its own geometric system. Clay, instead, lacks shape and takes the one impressed by exterior circumstances, people or things that surround it; conserving the tracks of all the grooves and the dimple of all the fingers, like wax, like putty: cubic, spherical, pyramidal, according to modeling. Thus, the mediocre characters: sensitive to their living mean's coercions, unable to serve a faith or a passion.

Beliefs are the support of character; the man who possesses firm and elevated beliefs has excellent character. Shadows don't believe. Personality is in is in perpetual evolution and individual character is its delicate instrument; it must be annealed without rest in the fountains of culture and love. What we inherit implies certain fatality that education corrects and orients. Men are predestined to conserve their own line between the coercive social pressures; the shadows do not have resistance, adapting to others to the point of becoming disfigured and domesticated. Character is expressed by activities that constitute conduct. Each human being has a corresponding belief; if it is "firmness and light", as the poet said, firmness is the solid foundation of his culture and the light is his moral height.

Intellectual elements are not sufficient to determine orientation; the feebleness of character depends as much on moral consistency as of those intellectual features, or even more. Without some ingenuity and wit, it is impossible to ascend the paths of virtue; without some virtue, the paths of inventiveness and creativity are inaccessible. In action, become consumed. The force of beliefs is rooted in not being purely rational; we think with the heart and our head. They do not imply an exact knowledge of reality: they are simple judgments in reference to them, susceptible of being corrected or replaced. They are current instruments; each belief is an opinion contingent and provisional. Every judgment implies an affirmation. Every negation is, in itself, affirmative; to negate is to affirm a negation. The attitude is identical: we believe what we affirm or what we negate. The contrary of affirmation is not negation but doubt. In order to affirm or negate is indispensable to believe. To be somebody is to intensively believe; to think is to believe; to love is to believe; to hate is to believe; to live is to believe.

Beliefs are the engines and motifs of all human activity. They do not need to be truths: we believe before any reasoning and each new notion is acquired through beliefs already pre-formed. Doubt should be commonplace, but with scarce criteria of logical certainty, the first attitude, however, is an adherence to what faces our experience. The primitive manner of thinking things through consists in believing them such as we feel them; children, savages, ignorants and feeble spirits are prone to all the mistakes, people's frivolous toys, things and circumstances. Anybody would stray the ship without a rudder. Those beliefs are like the nails that enter after a single blow; firm convictions enter like screws, little by little, by dint of observation and study. It costs more work to acquire them; but while the nails yield to the first vigorous stroke, screws resist and maintain the personality standing. Ingenuity and culture correct the simple primitive illusions and the imposed routines by society to the individual: knowledge's depth enables men to form their own ideas and conclusions. To live dragged by others' ideas is equivalent to give up on life. Mediocre men are work of others and are everywhere: a form of being nobody and being nowhere.

Without unity character cannot be conceived. When absent, the man is amorphous or unstable; living adrift like a fragile boat in an ocean. That unity must be effective over time; depending, in great part, on the coordination of beliefs. They are active and dynamogenic forces, synthesizing personality. The natural history of human thought only studies beliefs, not certitudes. The species, the races, the nations, the parties, the groups, are animated by the material necessities that engender them, more or less conforming to reality, but always determining their action. To believe is the natural form of thinking to live.

The unity of beliefs allows men to behave in agreement with their own past: a habit of independence and free man's condition, in the relative sense that determinism consents. His acts are agile and rectilinear, can be foreseen in each circumstance; following without vacillation a charted route: all concurs to guard their dignity and to form an ideal. Always ready to put in the effort which they realize without fatigue. They feel free when they rectify their mistakes, and even more so when able to handle their passions. They want to be independent from all and everyone, which does not prevent them from being tolerant: they don't subject the price of their liberty in submission to others. Always doing what they want, since they

always want what is within their strength to realize. They know how to polish the work of their educators and they never believe their own culture complete. It could be said that they themselves have become who they are, seeing them emphasizing in all their acts the purpose of assuming their responsibility.

Man's beliefs are deep, rooted in vast knowledge; serving him like a secure helm to march through a route that he knows and does not hide from others; when he changes course is because his beliefs have transformed by a new experience, warmed by the deepest meditations. Shadow's beliefs are grooves plowed in water; any gust of wind deviates them; his opinion is changing and inconstant like a weather vane and their changes obey gross solicitations of immediate benefit and convenience. Men evolve according to changes in their beliefs, which can change whilst they continue to learn; the Shadows accommodate their beliefs to their appetites and can conceal the indignity with the name of evolution. If it depended on it, the latter would be equivalent to disequilibrium or shamelessness; many times to treason.

Firm beliefs, firm conduct. That is the criteria to appreciate character: Deeds. As stated in the biblical poem: "Indacaberis ex operibus vestris", you will be judged by your deeds. How many are there that appear to be men and are only are worth by the reached positions in the mediocratic herd! Observed from close up, their work examined, they are less than nothing, negative values. Shadows.

II- THE DOMESTICATION OF MEDIOCRE MEN

Gil Blas from Santillana is a shadow: his entire life is a continuous process of social domestication. If some original line allowed him to differentiate from his herd, the pile of social manure buries it to erase it. The herd offers him infinite advantages. It does not surprise that he accepts them in exchange for some renouncements compatible with his moral structure. It does not demand incredible deeds; his passive condescendence is sufficient for his deer's soul.

While men resist temptations, the shadows slip and fall by the slope; if a particle of originality bothers them, they eliminate it in order to fuse and confuse themselves better with others. They appear solid and soften up,

rough and then ease off, surly and become tame, hot and become lukewarm, shiny and then opacify, glowing and they die out, masculine and they feminize, upright and become flat. A thousand sordid snares ambush them from the time they make contact with their peers: they learn to measure up their virtues and to practice them with parsimony. Each separation costs them a disillusion, each deviation engenders mistrust. They mold their heart to prejudices and their intelligence to routines: domestication eases their life struggle.

Mediocrity fears the dignified man and adores the lackey. Gil Blas symbolizes the practical man who leverages every situation and in every villainy profits. Pursuing Stockman, the people's enemy, with all the zeal as placed in admiring Gil Blas: picking him up in the robbers' den and promoting him as a favorite in the courts. Is a man made of cork: floats. Has been a robber, a pimp, a snitch, petty thief, assassin, moneylender, swindler, racketeer, ungracious, hypocrite, traitor, politician; so many dirty dealings do not stop him from rising and offering smiles from his feeder. He is perfect in his genre. His secret is simple: he is a domestic animal. Enters the world as a serf and continues to be servile until his death, in all circumstances and situations: never a haughty gesture, at no time rush to face an obstacle.

The good classic language called domestic all servile men. And it was just. The habit of servitude brings about sentiments of domesticity, in courtiers as well as in the peoples. We would have to entirely copy the eloquent Discourse about the voluntary servitude, written by La Boetie in his adolescence and showered with glory by the commendation and praise dispensed by Montaigne. After him, thousands of pages fustigate subordination to social dogmatisms, the unconditional abidance of admitted prejudices, the respect to false hierarchies, the blind discipline to collective imposition, the systematic submission to the will of the powerful: all which strengthens domestication and has for unavoidable consequence servitude.

Excellent characters are indomitable: they have their North placed in their Ideal. Their "firmness" sustains them; their "light" guides them. The shadows, instead, degenerate. The wax easily liquefies; the crystal never loses its sharp edge. The mediocre men swamp their shadows when their surroundings instigate them; the superior men ascend in the same proportion in which their environment declines. In joy and adversity, loving

and disdaining, between laughs and tears, each firm man has a peculiar way of behaving that is his synthesis: his character. The shadows do not have that unity of conduct that allows anticipating the proper gesture in all occasions.

For Zeno, the stoic, character is the fountain of life and from it flow all of our actions. It sounds good, but it is imprecise. Moralists do not agree with the psychologists in their definitions: those preach like Cato and these describe like naturalists. Character is a synthesis. We must insist. It is an exponent of the whole personality and not just an isolated element. In the very philosophers, who develop their aptitudes in a partial manner, the character would appear to depend exclusively on intellectual conditions; vain mistake, because his conduct is the consequence of hundreds of other factors. To think is to live. All human ideals imply a systematic association of moral and volition, making the most vehement wishes of perfection converge on their object. The investigator of truth overcomes the society in which he lives: works for it and thinks for all, anticipating its needs, opposing its routines. Has social personality, adapted for the functions that cannot exercise in a hermit; but his social sentiments do not impose complicity in whatever is murky and shady. In his anastomosis with others, maintains his heart and brain free through his own character, which never disorients: those who have a character, are never tamed or domesticated.

Gil Blas thrives among men since the beginnings of time; the idealists of all times have protested against him. The Romantics, shrouded in sublime disdain, have protested against the servile temperaments; Musset, through Lorenzaccio's mouth, squeezes with heavy words the cowardice of the peoples used to servitude. And are not far behind the Individualists, whose most sublime lyrical flight reached Nietzsche: his most beautiful pages are a codex of anti-mediocre moral, an exaltation of qualities irreconcilable with the social discipline. The gregarious spirit, heavily fustigated by him, already has eloquent dissectors, that exhibit the solidary complications with which the faint-hearted resist the audacious men's initiatives, joining up in a diverse manner according to their interests of class, hierarchy or functions.

Wherever there were slaves and serfs, servile characters were created. Defeated the man, they did not kill him: they made him work for other's benefit. Subject to the yoke, trembling against the whip, the slaves folded

and their characters became imprinted with domesticity. Some – History tells- were rebels or reached dignities: rebelliousness has always been a gesture of hungry animal and its success was the price of complicities in vices of their masters. When reaching the exercise of some authority, they turned despotic, devoid of ideals able to stop them before infamy, as if they wanted to forget the suffered servitude with their abuses. Gil Blas was the lowest of the favorites.

Time and exercise adapt to servile life. The habit of resigning oneself in order to prosper creates springs every time more solid, automatisms that fade all individual features forever. Gil Blas is blemished by stigmas that make him unmistakable with a dignified man. Even if free, he continues to be a lackey and gives free rein to his low instincts. The habit of obeying engenders a domestic mentality. According to Aristotle, those born from serfs bring that mentality in their blood, inheriting servile habits and become unable to find a proper environment to form a proper character. Lives initiated in servitude have difficulty acquiring dignity. In antiquity the children of serfs suffered greater contempt, reputed to be morally worse than the adults reduced to the yoke by debts or battles; acquiring they inherited domesticity from their parents, intensifying it in later servitude. They were despised by their masters.

This is repeated in nations that had an inferior slave cast. It is legitimate. Mulattos, descendants from old slaves, are wont to be looked down upon in all white race nations that have abolished slavery; their toil in dissimulating their servile ancestry shows that they acknowledge the hereditary indignity condensed in them. That underestimation is natural. Just like the old slave became vain and insolent if he escalated to positions where he could be in charge, the mulattos are made proud in the inorganic South American mediocracies capturing functions and honors with which they satiate their appetites accumulated in secular domesticities.

Class creates identical inequalities to race. The serfs were as domestic as the slaves; the French Revolution gave political liberty to their descendants, but it was unable to provide them with moral liberty, the spring of dignity. The enriched bourgeois deserves the aristocrat’s disdain more than the proletarian’s hatred. They aspire to become part of the bourgeoisie; there is no worse chieftain than the old assistant, or worse Master than the old lackey. Aristocracies are logical disdaining the upstarts:

they consider them descendants from enriched lackeys and presume that they have inherited their domesticity at the same time than their money.

Those servile inclinations, rooted in the very bottom of ethnic or social heritage, are well regarded in the contemporary mediocracies that politically level the servile and the dignified man. The name has changed but the issue remains: domesticity is common in modern societies.

The legal abolition of slavery or servitude takes many decades; nations would not think of themselves civilized if they conserved them in their codes. Which does not twist their customs; the slave and serf continue to exist, by temperament or lack of character. They are not property of their Masters, but look for others' tutelage, like the stray animals returning to their familiar environments. Their gregarious psychology has not changed, declaring man's rights; liberty, equality and fraternity are fictions that flatter them without redeeming them. There are inclinations that survive all equalitarian laws and make love the yoke or the whip. Laws cannot give manhood to shadows, character to the amorphous, dignity to the debased, initiative to the imitators, virtue to the honest, audacity to the meek, eagerness of liberty to the servile. For this reason, in full democracy, the mediocre characters naturally look for their low level: domestication.

In certain subject without character from the maternal chalice till their tomb, their conduct cannot follow constant norms. They are dangerous because their yesterday says nothing about their tomorrow; acting at the mercy of accidental impulses, always random. If they possess some valid elements, they are scattered, incapable of synthesis; the most subtle jolt brings about their savage and primitive atavisms, deposited in the deepest grooves of their personality. Their imitations are fragile and with weak roots. For this reason, they are antisocial, incapable of rising to the honest condition of herd animals.

To other unfortunates, without irreparable lagoons in their temperament, society skimps on their education. The big cities are teeming with children morally shelterless, preyed by misery, without a home or school. They live tasting vices and harvesting corruption, without the habit of honesty and without the luminous example of virtue. Benumbed their intelligence and restricted their best inclinations, their will wanders, incapable of overcoming the fatal convergences that strive to sink them.

And if they spend their infancy without rolling about in the swamp, they trip later with new obstacles.

Work, creating the habit of effort, would be the best school of character; but society teaches to hate it, imposing prematurely, like a disagreeable ignominious thing or an infamous vilification, under the slavery of yokes and timetables, executed by hunger or for avarice, until man flees from it as from punishment: he could only come to love it when it becomes an spontaneous exercise of his tastes and aptitudes. Thus, society completes its work; the ones who do not sink because of the unhealthy education, are wrecked by brutalizing work. In the complex modern activity, the faltering wills are tolerated; their incongruities occult while the acts refer to vulgar automatisms of daily life; but when a new circumstance obligates them to look for a solution, the personality rattles at random and reveals its intrinsic vices. Those degenerate men are untamable.

The others, like Gil Blas, lack the aplomb to rule their own conduct and forget that the slightest fall can be the initial step towards complete degradation. They ignore that each effort of dignity consolidates our resolve: the more dangerous is the truth we speak today, the easier it will be to pronounce others louder tomorrow. In the worlds mined by hypocrisy, all conspire against the civil virtues: men corrupt one another, imitating and stimulating each other in what is murky, justifying themselves reciprocally. A lukewarm atmosphere hinders the one who yields for the first time to the temptation of the unjust and the consequences of that fist mistake can extend to the infinite. The mediocre men don't know how to avoid it; in vain they vow to return to the good path and amend themselves. There is no rehabilitation for shadows. They prefer to excuse the slight deviations, without adverting that those prepare for the deep ones. All men who any other way would be perfect since their birth, know those small weaknesses, but while in the firm characters they pass as a graze that leaves no mark, in the soft ones they plow a groove through which recurrence is facilitated. That is the road to vilification. The virtuous men ignore it; the honest ones fall to temptation. Like a Gil Blas, only the first fall is costly and difficult, afterward, they keep falling like the water of waterfalls, jumping from smallness to smallness and pettiness to pettiness, from curiosity to curiosity. The remorse of the first fault cedes to the necessity to hide it with others before which they are no longer scared. Their character becomes

dissociated and twisted, walking blindly, tripping up and disguising their intentions, climbing through tortuous and winding roads, looking for skillful accomplices to advance in the darkness. After the first trials, they leave in a hurry, until the very roots of their moral become annihilated. Thus, they slip down the slope, increasing the cohort of lackeys and parasites: hundreds of Gil Blas undermine the pillars of society that has pretended to model them to their image and likeness.

Men without ideals are incapable of resisting the wiles of material surfeits sown on their paths. Once they have given way to temptation they are left primed, like the wild beasts who have tasted human flesh. Given the circumstance of always thinking with society's head, the domestic man is the safest pillar of all the political, religious, moral and social prejudices. Gil Blas always has his hands congested by the applause to the anointed and with a sharp knife to assault the rebel who announces a heresy. Panurgism and intolerance are the colors of his rosette, whose respect he demands from all.

It is incalculable the infinity of domestic individuals that surround us. Each official has a voracious herd, submissive to his whims, like the hungry people to who satiates them. If they were able of shame, the flatterers would live redder than poppies; far from it, they parade their domesticity and are proud of it, exhibiting with pride, as a panther shows off her velvety spots. The domestication takes place in one hundred ways, tempting his appetites. Within the limits of official influence, the means of acclimatization multiply, especially in nations infested with functionaries and bureaucracies. The ones with weak character do not resist; they yield to that hypnotization. The loss of their dignity starts when they open their eyes to the sinecure that thrills their stomach or clouds their vanity, bowing to the hands that today offer a favor and tomorrow will steer the reins. Although there is no legal servitude today, many subjects, free of forced domesticity, come to it voluntarily, by implicit vocation. They are sullied from their cradle; even if there is no benefits need, they are instinctively servile. They exist in all social strata. The price of their indignity varies with their rank and they translate into forms as diverse as the people exercising them.

Cheering Gil Blas, they belittle the moral level of peoples and races; it is not tolerance to stimulate the miscreant and their wicked behavior. The price of real merit drops. The silent gentleness is preferred to the haughty

dignity. The skin has more shades when the vertebral spine is less solid; the good manners are better appreciated than the good actions. If Santillana dons his gloves to steal, he deserves the admiration of all; if Stockmann removes his clothes to save a castaway, he is condemned for scandalous behavior. In the domesticated nations, a moment arrives in which virtue appears to be an insult to the good customs.

The shadows live with the desire of castrating the firm characters and decapitating the winged thinkers, not forgiving the luxury of being virile or having brains. The lack of virility is praised as a refinement, as in riding horses. Ignorance appears a coquetry and flirtation, like the elegant doubt that perturbs some fanatics without ideals. Merits become dangerous contraband, obligated to excuse and hide as if they could offend with their existence. When the dignified man begins to awaken misgivings and apprehensions, the collective vilification is grave; when dignity seems absurd and is covered of ridicule, the domestication of the mediocre men has reached its extremes.

III- VANITY

Man is. The shadow seems. Man places his honor in his proper merit and is supreme judge of himself; ascending to dignity. The shadow places his in the estimation of others and renounces to judging himself; descending to vanity. There is a moral of honor and another that is his caricature: to be or to appear. When an ideal of perfection impulses us to be better, that cult of the own merits consolidates dignity in men; when the eagerness to appear drags to low behavior, the cult of shadows ignites vanity.

Both are born of self-love: sisters by their origin like Abel and Caen. And even more enemies than them, irreconcilable. Diverse forms of self-love. They follow divergent roads. One blooms through pride, scrupulous zeal focused in self-respect; the other is born from arrogance, appetite of culmination in front of others. Pride is an arrogance born of noble motives and wants to increase the merit; arrogance is an excessive presumption and seeks to increase the shadow. Catechisms and dictionaries have collaborated to the moral “mediocrization”, subverting the terms that designate the eminent and the vulgar. Where the Church’s fathers spoke of “great arrogance” like the old, fustigating it they translated the word to pride,

confusing different sentiments and mistaking vanity with dignity which is his antithesis. A poor attempt to appraise at equal price men and shadows, with the consequent detriment of the former.

In its embryonic form self-love reveals itself as a desire of praise and fear of censures: an exaggerated sensitivity to others' opinion. In the characters conformed to routine and usual prejudices, the desire to shine in its medium and the judgment suggested to the small surrounding group are stimuli for action. The simple circumstance of living in a flock predisposes to pursue others' acquiescence; self-esteem is favored by the contrast or comparison with others. We are dealing with a normal sentiment.

But the roads diverge. In the dignified men, self-judgment precedes the approval of others; in the mediocre men merits are deferred and shadows cultivated. The former live for themselves; the latter vegetate for others. If men did not live in society, self-love would be dignity in all; living in groups it becomes worthy and dignified only in the firm characters.

Certain preoccupations, reigning in mediocracies, exalt tamed and domesticated men. Glory's glitter over the chosen foreheads dazzles the inept ones, like the rich's satiation makes the miserable jealous. The praise of merit is a stimulus for its simulation. Obsessed by success and incapable of dreaming with glory, many impotent men bloat of illusory merits and secret virtues others don't recognize; believing themselves to be actors in the human comedy; they enter life building themselves a stage, big or small, rich or poor, shadowy or luminous; living with perpetual preoccupation of others' judgement over their shadow. They consume their existence thirsty of distinguishing themselves in their orbit, of perturbing their world, of cultivating others' attention through any means and manner. The difference (if there is one) between the student's vanity who pursues excellence in all exams and that of the politician who dreams of being acclaimed minister or president, or the vanity of the novelist who aspires to see editions of hundreds of thousands of his books or the assassin who wants to see his mugshot on the front pages, is purely quantitative.

The exaltation of self-esteem, dangerous in vulgar spirits, is useful to men who serve an ideal. This crystallizes them in dignity; in vulgar spirits, it degenerates in vanity. Success conceits the dumb, but never the excellent

man. Glory's anticipation hypertrophies the personality in the superior man: its natural condition. Doesn't the athlete have, perhaps, excessive biceps to the point of deformity? The function makes the organ. The "self" is the very organ of originality: absolute in the genius. What is absurd in the mediocre man, in the superior man becomes an adornment: simple exponent of force. The bulky muscle is not ridicule in the athlete; but excessive adiposity would be, becoming monstrous and useless, like the vanity of the insignificant. Some men of genius like Sarmiento, would have been incomplete without their megalomania.

Their pride never exceeds the imbeciles' vanity. The apparent difference keeps proportion to the merit. From a yard afar and to the naked eye nobody sees the ant's leg, but all perceive the lion's claw: the same thing occurs with the noisy egotism of men and the unseen arrogance of the shadows. They can't be confused. The vain lives comparing himself to those who surround him, envying others' excellence and gnawing all reputations he cannot equal; the proud man does not compare himself with those he judges inferior and sets his gaze in the ideal types of perfection that are high and ignite his enthusiasm.

Pride is the indispensable subsoil of dignity, which imprints men with a certain nice gesture that the shadows censure. For this, the Babel's language of the vulgar men has confused the meaning of the word, not knowing if it designates a vice or a virtue. All is relative. If there are merits, pride is a right; if there aren't, it's vanity. The man who affirms an Ideal and perfects himself towards it, disdains, with this, the inferior atmosphere which asphyxiates him; it is a natural feeling, cemented by a constant and effective inequality. For the mediocre men, it would be more pleasing not to be faced with that humbling difference; but they forget that they are their enemies, constraining their robust trunk like the ivy to the Holm oak, to choke him in the infinite number. The dignified man is obligated to make fun of the thousand routines that the servile adores under the name of principles; his conflict is perpetual. Dignity is a breakwater raised by the individual against the harassing tide. It is isolation of the domestic men and disdain of their shepherds, almost always slaves of their own flock.

IV- DIGNITY

He who aspires to resemble and appear renounces being a dignified man. In very few men, ingenuity and virtue add up in a total of dignity: they form a natural aristocracy, always exiguous and meager compared to the infinite number of meek and omitted spirits. Supreme creed of all idealism, dignity is unique, intangible, untransmutable. It is the synthesis of all virtues that steel man and erase the shadow: wherever it lacks, the sentiment of honor does not exist. And just like the peoples without dignity are flocks, the individuals without it are slaves.

The adamantine temperaments – firmness and light- step aside from all complicity, defy others' opinion if it is necessary to save their own and decline any mundane good that may require an abdication, offering their own life before betraying their ideals. They go straight, alone, without contaminating themselves in routine duties, converted in living protest against all subservience, servility and misbehavior. The vain shadows hobble to apologize in numbers, fleeing the intimate sanctions of the conscience; tamed, they are incapable of virile gestures, lacking courage. Dignity implies moral value. The pusillanimous and faint-hearted are impotent, like confused men, some think about when it's convenient to act, and the others act without thinking. The insufficiency of the effort implies the disorientation of the impulse: the merit of the actions is measured by the effort and not by the results. Without courage there is no honor. All its forms imply dignity and virtue. With its help, the wise men undertake the exploration of the unknown, the moralists mine the sordid fountains of evil, the audacious risk themselves to violate the height and extension, the just ones are annealed with adverse fortune, the firm ones resist all temptation and the austere the vices, the martyrs end up in the bonfire because they unmask hypocrisy, the saints die for an Ideal. Longing for perfection, is indispensable, sentenced Lamartine, "Courage is the first of the eloquences, the eloquence of character." Noble sentence. The one who aspires to be an eagle must look afar and fly high; the one who gives up and resigns to lug like a worm renouncing the right to protest if smashed.

Meekness and ignorance favor the domestication of the mediocre characters, adapting them to meek and quiet life; courage and culture exalt the personality of the excellent ones, blooming of dignity. The lackey asks; the dignified deserves. The former solicits from favor what the latter expects from merit. To be dignified means not to ask for what is deserved,

nor to accept what is undeserved. While the servile climb among the weeds of favoritism, the austere ascend by the ladder of their virtues. Or they do not ascend at all.

Dignity stimulates all perfection in man; vanity spurs the success of shadows. The dignified man has written the motto on his blazon and lapel: what has for price a particle of honor is costly. The bread soaked in adulation, fattens the servile and poisons the dignified men. These prefer to lose a right than to obtain a favor; a thousand years would be easier than to prosper unworthily. Any wound is transient and could hurt for an hour; the lightest domesticity would remorse him a lifetime.

When success does not depend on the proper merits, it is sufficient to remain erect, unperturbed in the self-dignity. In the domestic struggles, the obstinate argument can triumph over the smiling merit; the pertinacious attitude of the undignified men is proportional to their numbness. The exemplary men disdain any favors; they consider themselves superior to what can be obtained without merit. They prefer to live crucified by their pride than to prosper crawling; they would like to see their Ideals remain spotless after their death without stains of debasements, as if they were to espouse them beyond their death.

The dignified characters remain alone, without displaying in their hips iron marks; they are like cattle that smell the tender clover from the virgin farmland, without accepting the easy ration from the stables. If the prairie is arid, it does not matter; in free oxygen they take advantage of more than copious barleys, with the benefit that the former is taken and these are received from somebody. They prefer to be alone if unable to be with their peers. Flowers surrounded by a bunch lose their own perfume and fragrance. Obligated to live among unequals, the dignified man remains foreign to all he esteems inferior. Descartes said that he walked among men as if they were trees; and Banville wrote about Gautier: “He was one of those necessarily and invincibly free under all regimens: achieving his tasks with disdainful haughtiness and with the firm designation of an exiled God.”

The dignified man ignores the cowardice that dozes at the bottom of the servile characters. His respect of merit obliges him to discard all shadow that lacks it, to attack it if menacing and to punish if hurtful. When the

crowd that blocks his desires and dreams is anodyne and without adversaries to attack, the dignified man seeks refuge in himself and entrenches within his ideals remaining quiet, fearing bothering with his words the shadows that listen to him. And while the climate changes, as is deadly in the alternative seasons, awaits anchored in his pride as if it were the most natural and secure port for his dignity.

The dignified man lives with the obsession of not depending on anybody; he knows that without material independence, the honor is exposed to a thousand smirches and taints and to acquire it he will tolerate the hardest labors, whose fruit will be his future freedom. All parasites are serfs; all beggars are domestic. The hungry can be a rebel: but never a free man. Misery is a powerful enemy of dignity. She destroys the vacillating and indecisive characters and incubates the worse servitudes. The one who has traversed poverty worthily is a heroic exemplar of character.

The poor man cannot live his life, as the compromises of indigence are so many; to redeem oneself from it is to begin to live. All the elevated men live dreaming of a modest material independence; misery is a clamp that blocks the tongue and paralyzes the heart. We must escape those claws in order to choose the loftiest of Ideals, the most agreeable job, the most saintly woman, the most loyal friends, the most beautiful horizons, the most tranquil isolation. Poverty imposes social enrollment; the individual registers in a union, more or less day laborer, more or less officer, acquiring duties and suffering degrading pressures that push him to domesticity. The Stoics used to teach the secrets of Dignity: to content oneself with what we have, restricting all necessities. A free man does not expect anything from others, does not need to ask. The happiness provided by money is not to have to worry about it; ignoring this precept the tight-fisted, penny pincher is neither free nor happy. The goods we have are the base of our independence; the ones we desire become the chain assuring our slavery. Fortune increases the liberty of the cultivated spirits and turns shameful the foolishness of the boor and uneducated. Supreme is the indignity of those who adulate and have fortune; this would allow them to redeem themselves of domesticities if they weren’t slaves of vanity.

The only intangible goods are the ones we accumulate in the brain and the heart; when they are missing, no treasure replaces them. The proud ones have the cult of their dignity; they rather possess it immaculate, free of

remorse, without weaknesses that could degrade or debase it. In its name they sacrifice goods, honors and success: all that is propitious to the shadow's growth. To keep their self-esteem they don't hesitate in facing the opinion of the tamed subjects and charge against their prejudices; frequently appearing to be undisciplined, disorderly and dangerous among the ones that in vain attempt to corrupt their haughtiness and dignity. They are rare in the mediocracies, whose moral flatness exposes them to misanthropy; they have a certain disdain and aristocratic flavor that annoys the vainest since it humiliates and shames them. Inflexible and tenacious, they carry within an indubitable faith, a conviction that does not tremble, an indomitable energy that neither yields nor fear a thing. They frequently have rough and urticarial features to the amorphous men. In some cases they can be altruists, or because to be Christian is the highest meaning of the word or because deeply affectionate: then presenting one of the most sublime characters, most splendidly beautiful which grace the human nature. They are the Honor's Saints, dignity's poets. Being heroes, they forgive others' cowardice; always victorious to themselves, they pity those who through life's battle sow, in pieces, their own dignity. If statistics could inform us of the number of men who have this character in each nation, this number would suffice by itself, more than any other, to indicate the moral value of a nation.

Dignity, the eagerness of autonomy, forces us to reduce dependence on others to an essential level. La Bruyere, who lived as an intruder in the courtesan domesticity of his century, knew how to measure the highest precept in Epictetus' Manual, owning the statement and without reducing his own glory: "se faire valoir par des choses qui ne dependent point des autres, mais de sois seul, au renoncer a se faire valoir!" – "to assert oneself for things that do not depend on others, but on oneself, or to renounce to assert oneself!".

That maxim appears invaluable and of infinite resources in life, useful for the virtuous individuals and those with ingenuity, intrinsic treasure of excellent characters; it is, instead, forbidden where mediocrity reigns, "because it would banish from the Courts the trickeries, ruses, contrivances, adulations and intrigues." Nations would not be full of domesticated and servile individuals, but of excellent men who would bequeath fewer vanities and more noble examples to their sons. Loving their own merits more than

the indecorous prosperity, love for virtue, desire for glory, cult for the ideals of incessant perfection would grow: The admiration for the Geniuses, the Saints and the Heroes. That moral dignity of men would mark the decline of Shadows in History.

Chapter V

ENVY

THE PASSION OF MEDIOCRE MEN

Envy is men's adoration of shadows, of merit for mediocrity. It is the rubor on the cheek, sonorously slapped by others' glory. It is the fetter dragged by the losers. It is the aloe juice relished by the powerless and helpless. It is a venomous humor that flows from the wounds opened by the disillusion of the own insignificance. Through the Caudine gallows pass, sooner or later, the ones enslaved by vanity: they march livid of anguish, ashamed of their own sadness, without suspecting that their bark envelops an unequivocal consecration of others' merit. The inextinguishable hostility of the fools has always served as a pedestal to monuments.

It is the most ignoble of the roughest habits that make the vulgar character boorish and ugly. The one who envies debases himself without knowing it, demonstrating subaltern and junior behavior; this passion is the psychological stigma of a humiliating inferiority, felt and acknowledged. It's not sufficient to be inferior in order to envy since every man is inferior to somebody in some sense; it's necessary to suffer from others' success, joy and any culmination. In this suffering is the moral nucleus of envy: it bites the heart like an acid, eats it like a moth, it rusts it like oxide does to metal.

Plutarch used to say, among the bad passions, none worse – and La Rochefoucauld repeated – that there are some souls rotten to the point of boasting of infamous and vile vices; but none had the courage to confess envy. To acknowledge envy would imply, at the same time, to declare oneself inferior to the envied individual; which is an abominable passion and so universally detested that shames the most shameless and makes people do the unspeakable to hide it.

It is surprising that psychologists forget it in their studies of passions, limiting themselves to mention it as a particular case of jealousy. Its diffusion and virulence have always been so great that the Greek and Latin mythology attributes it superhuman origins, displaying its birth from the nocturnal darkness. The myth assigns it an old face, horribly thin and bloodless, with the head covered by heads of serpents instead of hair. Her gaze is surly and the eyes sunken; the teeth dark and the tongue greased with fatal poisons; with one hand grabs three snakes, and with the other a hydra; incubating in its bosom a monstrous reptile that devours it continuously and instills its venomous juices; it's agitated; does not smile; sleep never closes its eyelids over its irritated eyes. Every happy event sours him or stirs his sadness; destined to suffer, it's the executioner implacable with himself.

It is a treacherous passion and proper to hypocrisies. It is to hatred like a pick to the sword; used by the people who cannot compete with the envied ones. In the impetus of hatred, the petty-minded gesture reigns which in a desperate shudder destroys and annihilates; in the surreptitious creeping of envy, only the timid crawl of those who seek to bite the heels is perceived.

Theophrastus believed that envy is confused with hatred or originates from it, opinion also embraced by Aristotle: his teacher, Plutarch, bridged the question, preoccupied with establishing the differences between the two passions (Moral works, II). He says that at first sight they can be confused; they seem to spring up from evil, and when associated become stronger, like diseases which become complicated. Both suffer from others' progress and delight in their troubles, but this similarity is not sufficient to confuse them if we observe their differences. We can only hate what we believe to be evil or harmful; all prosperity, instead, excites envy, like any resplendence irritates sick eyes. Objects and animals can induce hatred, but only humans can elicit envy. Hatred can be justified, motivated; envy is always unjust since prosperity does not hurt anybody. These two passions, like plants of the same species, are nourished and fortified by equivalent causes: the most perverse are hated more, but the most meritorious are envied the most. For this reason, Themistocles of Athens used to say, in his youth, that he had not yet accomplished any brilliant acts, because nobody envied him. Just like the cantharides prosper over the blondest wheat fields and the blooming rosebushes, envy reaches men famous for their character

and virtue. Hatred is not disarmed by good or bad fortune; Envy is. The sun that shines perpendicularly from the sky's zenith reduces the shadow to little or nothing: thus, observes Plutarch, the glow of glory shrinks the shadow of envy and makes it disappear.

Hatred that injures and offends is fearsome; envy that quiets and conspires is repugnant. An admirable book says that it is like the cavities of teeth. That book is the Bible. The cruelest words that a mad man can throw to one's face do not offend but a centesimal part of that which the envious ones constantly saw behind our backs; they ignore the reactions to hatred and express anger and irritation cowardly, unable to curl up in virile reactions: it could be said that their mouths are soured by a bitterness, unable to swallow or eject it. Just like oil puts out lime but enlivens fires, received goods and benefits eliminate hatred in the noble spirits and exasperates envy in the unfit ones. The envious are ungrateful, just like the sun is radiant, the clouds are opaque and snow is cold: Nature.

Hatred is rectilinear and does not fear truth: envy is twisted and works through lies. Envy causes more suffering than hatred: like those sickly torments which become terrifying at night, amplified by the horror of darkness.

Hatred can boil in great hearts: it can be just and saint, not infrequently, when it wants to erase tyranny, infamy, indignity. Envy belongs to small hearts. The conscience of one's own merit suppresses villainy; the man who feels superior cannot envy, nor can envy the happy loony living with his megalomania. His hatred is standing and attacks frontally. Cesar annihilated Pompey without lowly tricks; Donatello defeated Brunelleschi with his "Christ" without debasements; Nietzsche fulminated Wagner without envying him. Just like geniality senses glory and gives to its predestined an apocalyptic gesture, certainty of a dark future turns the mediocre myopic and reptile like. For this reason, men without merits continue to be envious despite the successes obtained by their mundane shadow, as if an internal remorse were to scream at them that they usurp them without deserve. That conscience of their mediocrity is their torment; they understand that they can only remain at the top by blocking others' climbing and their discovery. Envy is a defense of shadows against men.

With the stated differences, the classics accept the relationship between Envy and Hatred, without confusing both passions. It is convenient to illustrate the problem distinguishing similar passions: emulation and jealousy.

Envy, without a doubt, is rooted like the others in an affective tendency, but possesses special characters that allow differentiation. One can envy what others already have and would wish to have, feeling that one's is a desire without hope; but one can be jealous of what one already possesses and fears losing; one can emulate after something that others also desire, with the possibility of reaching it.

An example taken from the most extraordinary source will illustrate the issue. We envy the neighbor's woman and that we desire, when we sense the impossibility of disputing her. We are jealous with the woman who belongs to us when we judge uncertain her possession and fear that somebody may share it or take over. We compete for her favors in noble emulation, when we see the possibility of conquest under equal conditions with somebody else with the same desires. Envy is born, then, from the sentiment of inferiority with respect to their object; jealousy derives from the compromised sentiment of possession; emulation springs from the powerful sentiment that escorts noble personality's affirmation.

Because of deformation of a selfish tendency, some men are naturally inclined to envy to those who possess such superiority yearned in vain by them; envy is greater when the acquisition of the desired good becomes more remote. It is the reverse of emulation; this one is a driving and fruitful force, whereas the former is like a remora that blocks and sterilizes the efforts of the envious men. Bartrina understood it well in his admirable five-line stanza:

Envy and emulation

Kindred are said to be

Even if in all different

Just like kinfolks are

Diamond and coal.

Emulation is always noble: even hatred can be noble sometimes. Envy is a cowardice that belongs to the weak and feeble, an impotent hatred, a manifest incapacity to compete or hate.

Talent, beauty, energy, would like to see themselves reflected in everything and intensified in innumerable projections; foolishness, ugliness and impotence suffer even more but for the good of others than for the own misery. For this reason, all superiority is admiring and all inferior subjacency is envious. To admire is to feel oneself grow in the emulation with the greater objects of our admiration.

An ideal immunizes and protects us against envy. The one who hears echoes of prophetic voices while reading the great thinkers; the one who feels their visionary and divine clamor be recorded in his heart with characters deep like scars; the one who becomes entranced contemplating the supreme plastic creations; the one who enjoys intimate shivers while witnessing the masterworks accessible to his senses giving himself to life, palpitating in them and moved till his eyes overflow with tears and the bustling heart is snatched in emotional fever; this man has a noble spirit and can incubate the desire to create such great things like the ones he knows to admire. The man who is unmoved reading Dante, watching Leonardo, listening to Beethoven, can swear that Nature has not ignited in his brain the supreme torch and will not be able to admire Nature through the works of geniuses.

Emulation presumes eagerness of equivalence, implies the possibility of leveling oneself up; greets the strong men on their road to glory, marching itself as well. Only the impotent and declared convict poisons his spirit harassing the march of those they can't follow.

All of envy's psychology is summarized in a fable, worthy of inclusion in children's books. A fat toad was chanting in his swamp as he saw a firefly shine in the high rocks. He thought that no other being had the right to display qualities that he himself could never have. Mortified by his own impotence, he jumped towards the firefly and covered her with his cold belly. The innocent firefly dared asked him: "Why do you cover me?" And the toad, congested by envy, could only ask: "Why do you shine?"

II- PSYCHOLOGY OF ENVIOUS MEN

Since Envy is an involuntary cult of merit, envious individuals are, unwillingly, their natural priests. Even Homer, in Thersites, incarnated the envious men in heroic times; as if their physical ills were meager enough to expose them to the eternal reproach, in a simple verse providing the somber line of their moral, proclaiming them enemy of Achilles and Ulysses: can be measured by the excellence of the people they envy.

Shakespeare drew a definitive silhouette in his Iago, the main antagonist in Othello. Ferocious and evil, nursing infamies and slanders, capable of all the treacheries and all the falsehoods. The envious belongs to a rickety and petty moral species, worth of compassion or contempt. Without the courage to be an assassin, is resigned to be vile. Debasing others, becomes desperate of his rise.

The family offers infinite varieties, because of the combination of others' stigmas with the fundamental. The passive envious man is solemn and sententious; the active one is a bilious scorpion. But lugubrious or bilious, never learns to laugh with intelligent and healthy laughter. His grin is false: laughs against the grain.

Who does not rub elbows in their intellectual world? The passive envious man has a servile strain. If he tries to practice goodness, is mistaken till cause murder: we could say that he is myopic surgeon predestined to hurt vital organs and respect the cancerous ones. He does not give ground before any vile baseness when a star rises in their horizon: pursues merit into their tomb. He is serious, due to inability and incapacity to laugh; joy and cheerfulness of the contented and satisfied torments him. He proclaims the importance of solemnity and practices it, knowing that his congeners tacitly approve that hypocrisy that shields the hopeless inferiority: does not vacillate in sacrificing his own children's life, pushing them, if necessary, to the very brink of their tomb.

The active envious man possesses an intrepid eloquence, concealing with torrents of words their styptic limited ideas. He pretends to probe the depths of others' spirit, without having been able to disentangle their own. He seems to have a thousand tongues, like the classic Revelais' monster. Through all of them he distills his insidious serpent-like reticent compliments, because the itchy viscosity of their false praise is the maximum of their moral courage. He multiplies into infinity; has a

thousand legs and insinuates everywhere; sowing intrigue among his own accomplices, and, given the opportunity, betrays them. Knowing himself disowned by Glory beforehand, he seeks refuge in those academies where the mediocre men soak up vanity; if some inexplicable paternity complicates the quietness of his sterile maturity, you could swear that their work is the fruit of others' effort. And to be complete, he is a coward, dragging himself before the ones disturbed through the nights by the aura of bright ingenuity and wit, kissing the hand of those who know and despise him, humiliated before him. He knows himself inferior; his vanity only aspires to get even with the fragile compensations of the trick at ground level.

Despite their heterogeneous temperaments, destiny tends to group the envious men in circles or groups, serving as mortar the common suffering triggered by others' joy. There they unburdened themselves of their intimate woes smearing the envied men and pouring out all their bile like homage to talent's superiority which humiliates them. They are able of envying the great historic figures as if they personally detested them. Some envy Socrates and others envy Napoleon, believing they could compare themselves to them by debasing them; able to make a god out of Brunetiere or a Boulanger. But those pernicious pleasures little decrease their misfortune, centered in suffering from all happiness and tormenting themselves by all glory. Rubens sensed it beforehand when painting Envy in a picture for the Uffizi Gallery, suffering between the luminous pomp of the unforgettable regency.

The envious man feels as if he were marching towards the Calvary observing others climb the summit. He dies in the torment of envying others who ignore or despise him, as a worm dragging itself over the statue's baseboard.

All rumors of wings appear to make him tremble as if they were a gibe to his chicken-like flights. Swears the light, knowing that in his own shadows there will not be a single sunrise of glory. If he could organize a hunt of eagles or decree shutting down the stars!

What is to others cause of happiness can be the object of envy. The inability to satisfy a desire or fulfill an appetite determines this passion that makes them suffer from others' good. The criteria to value what is envied is

purely subjective: each man believes himself to be the measure of others, according to the judgment he has of himself.

Envy is suffered according to the inferiorities felt, irrespective of their objective value. The wealthy man can feel emulation or jealousy for others' wealth but will envy the talent. The beautiful woman will feel jealousy of others' beauty, but will envy the rich ones. It is possible to feel superior in one hundred things and inferior in only one; this is the fragile point through which envy tempts its assault.

The outstanding subject finds his cohort of envious men in the closest circle of colleagues, among the ones who would like to excel in the same manner. It is an unavoidable accident of every culmination, although in some professions it is more conspicuous; the men of letters are not left behind, but the comedians and whores would have the privilege if there weren't physicians. Envidia Medicorum is memorable since antiquity: Hippocrates knew it. The art has described it frequently, for enjoyment of patients surviving drugs and treatments.

The reason for envy is confused with that of admiration, since both are aspects of a similar phenomenon. But admiration is born in the strong and envy in the subaltern. To envy is an aberrant form of paying tribute to superiority. The moan that insufficiency plucks out of vanity is a special form of praise. Every culmination is envied. Beauty in women. Talent and fortune in men. In both, men and women, fame and glory.

Feminine envy tends to be delicate and perverse; the woman gives her scratch with sharp and shiny nails, bites with sharp teeth, squeezes with pale and fine fingers. All slander is insufficient to translate her sheer spite; in her surely thought Apelles of Kos when he represented Envy guiding Calumny with a feline hand.

The one who has been born beautiful –and Beauty to be complete requires, among other talents, Grace, Passion and Intelligence- has secured the cult of envy. Her most noble superiorities will be adored by the envious ones; and in them, they will sink their teeth, without realizing that passion converts them into vestals. A thousand wicked tongues would burn the incense of their critics; the oblique gaze of the suffering envious women would shoot down her beauty through the back; the sad souls would raise

their prayers in form of calumny, grim and plagued by remorse, which does not stop them.

Who has read the seventh metamorphoses, in Ovid's second book, will never forget that at Minerva's request, Aglaulus was transfigured into rock, thus punishing her envy of Herse, Mercury's lover. There is the most perfect allegory of envy, devouring snakes to feed her furor, like no other poet of the pagan era was able to outline.

The vulgar man envies fortunes and bureaucratic positions. Believes that having money and being an officer is others' supreme ideal, departing from what is his. Money allows the mediocre man to satisfy his most immediate vanities; the bureaucratic destiny assigns him a place in the State's ladder and prepares him ulterior retirements. There is why the proletarian envies the bourgeois, without renouncing to substitute him; and for this very reason, the budget's scale is a hierarchy of envies, perfectly graded by the size of the perks.

Talent –in all its intellectual and moral forms: dignity, character, energy- is the most envied treasure among men. In the domestic there is a sordid desire to level it all, an obtuse horror to the excessive individualization; forgives the owner of any moral shadow, forgives cowardice, servility, lies, hypocrisy, sterility, but does not forgive the one who abandons the line giving a step forward. It's enough if talent allows excelling in sciences, arts or in love, for the mediocre men to shiver of envy. Thus, around each star there is a nebula big or small, entourage of slanderers or legion of grumblers: the envious ones need to join efforts against their idol, just like to make ugly a Venusian beauty appear a thousand smallpox pustules.

The joy of the fertile, tortures the eunuchs pouring in their heart drops of bitter bile that sour them for all of their existence; this pain is the involuntary glory of others, the most indestructible sanction of their talent in their action or thinking. The words and grimaces of the envious man are lost in the swamp where he drags himself, like whistles of reptiles that greet the serene high flight of eagles, oblivious to them.

III- GLORY'S CRITICS

Anybody who feels able to create a destiny for himself with his talent and his effort is inclined to admire the effort and talent in others; the desire for his own glory cannot feel restrained by the legitimate elevation and loftiness of others. The one who has merits knows their price and respects them; appreciates in others what he would wish they would estimate in him. The mediocre man ignores that open admiration: many times he is resigned to accept the triumph that overflows the restrictions of his envy. But to accept is not to love. Resignation is not admiration.

The low spirits are malicious; the great geniuses are admiring. These know that the natural gifts are not transmuted into talent or in genius without effort, which is the measure of their merit. They know that each step towards the glory has cost work and vigils, deep meditations and endless trials, tenacious dedication, to that painter, that poet, that philosopher, that wizard; and understand that they have perhaps consumed their bodies, aging prematurely; and the biography of the great men teaches them that many renounced rest and bread, sacrificing them to gain time to meditate or compare a book to illuminate their meditations. That conscience of what merit implies, makes them respect it. The envious men, who ignore it, see the summits to which others arrive and not him, without suspecting that the road to glory is covered with thorns.

Every mediocre writer is candidate to become a poor critic. The incapacity to create pushes him to destroy. His lack of original inspiration induces him to ruminate others' talent, tarnishing with comments that denounce their irreparable damage. The high talents are level-headed to criticize their peers, as if they recognize in them consanguinity in direct line; they never see a rival in a peer. The great critics are optimal authors that about themes proposed by others, like the versifiers with forced foot; others' work is an occasion to exhibit their own ideas. The genuine critic enriches the works that he studies and leaves the marks of his personality in everything he touches.

The mediocre critics are, by instinct, enemies of the work they analyze: wanting to belittle them for the simple reason that they have not been able to write it. They would not know how to write it even if the criticized author replied: improve it. They have their hands blocked by the measuring tape; their eagerness to measure others responds to their dream to debase them to their own measure. They are, by definition, lenders,

parasites who live from others, since they limit themselves to jumble up with able hand what they have learned in the book they discredit. When a great writer is erudite they reproach him for lack of originality; if he is not, they rush to blame him of ignorance. If he employs reasoning already used by others, they call him plagiarist, even if he points out the source of his wisdom; if he forgets to mention them, they accuse them of improbity. They find a reason to curse and envy revealing their internal anguish. What makes them suffer, at last, is that others are admired and not them.

The mediocre critic is unable to arrange three ideas behind the yarn of routine threads; his smug ignorance obligates him to confuse marble with baked clay and voice with falsetto, inclined to conclude that every original writer is a heresiarch. The peasants would give what they don't possess to know how to write a bit, to incorporate themselves to the professional critics. It is the dream of those who cannot create. It allows a timorous slander that does not compromise, made of prudent mendacity, restricting the perversities to make them more acute, taking away crumbs here to scratch there, veiling and fogging all that could be object of admiration, always debasing with the occult hope that the critics and criticized ones could appear at the same level. The original writer knows that he torments the mediocre spirits, goading that passion that sickens them such as others' splendor; the desperation of the failures is the laurel that best rewards his luminous labor. To the glory of a Homer is juxtaposed the silliness of a Zoilus of Amphipolis.

They ferment in each genre of intellectual activity, like originality's lice: and do not forgive those who incubate in their brain that seditious larvae. They live to blemish it, dreaming with their extermination, conspiring with an intemperance of terrorists and display sordid calumnies that would make a pachyderm blush. They see danger in each act and a threat in each gesture; trembling while thinking that there are men able of subverting routines and prejudices, of igniting new planets in the sky, of sucking the energy out of rays and waterfalls, of infiltrating new ideals to the aged races, of suppressing the distance, of violating the force of gravity, of shuddering governments…

When a star rises, they peek from all cardinal points to chant the involuntary choir of its defamation. They appear by the dozens, by the thousands, like Lilliputians around a giant. The double-bass players from

slum quarters will bring shame to the supreme symphonists. Harmless gossip columnists will write about some distant thinker who ignores them. Many that in vain have tried to hit a spot of color will let their stream of prose drop as if a faucet of pus were opened over canvases that will live through the centuries. Any vulgar user of words will attack those who write deep and lasting thoughts. The ugly women will demonstrate that beauty is repulsive and the old ones will sustain that youth is foolish: they will avenge their misfortune in love saying that chastity is supreme among all virtues. And the rest, all at once will repeat that genius, sanctity and heroism are aberrations, madness, epilepsy, degeneration; denying the excellence of ingenuity, virtue and dignity; they will place those values below their own shadow, without realizing that the summits of the genius are unreachable for the mediocre man. If the latter were given a choice between Shakespeare or Sarcey, he would not hesitate a minute: would grumble about the first with the second's signature.

The unimaginative spirits are rebellious to admiration: they do not recognize the fire in the stars because they have never experienced a spark within. They never give themselves to ideals or passions that capture the heart of good faith: they prefer to oppose a thousand reasons to deprive themselves of the pleasure of admiring them. They will always confuse the muddy and the crystalline, debasing all ideal to the low intentions that fester in their brains. They will crumble all the beauty, forgetting that wheat grounded in flour cannot germinate in golden shafts facing the sun. Leibnitz said, "It is a great sign of mediocrity to always praise moderately". Pascal used to say that the vulgar spirits don't find difference among men: more original individuals are discovered as one has more talent. The low critic is miserable; admires a little in everything, but nothing deserves his decided admiration. Those who do not admire the best cannot improve. The one who sees defects and not beauty, blames and not merits, discordances and not harmonies, dies in a low level where vegetates with the illusion of being a critic. Those who do not know how to admire do not have a future and are incapable of rising towards an ideal perfection. To tame and placate admiration is cowardice. We should cultivate it as sacred ember, avoiding envy's cover with its ignominious patina.

Written reproach is harmless. Time is a just gravedigger: buries in the same pit the low critics and bad authors. While the envious men whisper,

the genius grows; after a while, those end up oppressed and these feel compassion, to limit their slow death.

The true punishment of these parasites is in the muted smile of the thinkers. The one who criticizes a high spirit tends his hand waiting for a tip of celebrity; it's enough to ignore and abandon him with his hand outstretched, denying him the notoriety that would be provided by a response. The author's silence kills the candidate; his indifference chokes him. Sometimes, presupposes that others have noticed their presence: dreams that others have named, mentioned, refuted and criticize him. But all is a simple dream; he must resign himself to envy from the shadows, from where he cannot get out. Those who are aware of their merit do not lend themselves to inflate the vanity of the first indigent they meet. He chooses his adversaries among his peers, equally dignified. The superior men can immortalize his lackeys or his assassins with one word. We must avoid that word, as some low critics have only been noticed and we have news of them because some genius has honored them by kicking their butts.

IV- A DANTESQUE SCENE: HIS PUNISHMENT

The envious men's punishment should be to cover them with favors and recognition, to make them feel that their envy is received more as homage than a lance wound. It is more generous, more humane. The goods received by the envious individual constitute his most exasperating humiliation; if it is not possible to wine and dine him, it is necessary to ignore him. No patient is responsible for his ailment, we could not forbid him this moaning and complaints. Envy is a disease and there is nothing more respectable than the right to lament when one suffers vanity's congestions.

The envious creature is the only victim of his own poison; envy devours him like cancer eats viscera; chokes him like ivy to an oak. For this reason, Poussin, in an admirable canvas, painted this monster biting his arms and shaking his hair of serpents that threaten without pause. Dante considered the envious men unworthy of hell. In his wise distribution of sorrows and punishments, he imprisoned them in purgatory, proper to their mediocre condition. They lie intimidated in a circle of gray rock, seated next to an angry wall like their teary faces, covered by hair-cloths, forming

a panorama of living cemetery. The sun denies them its light and warmth; their eyes are sown with wires, because they could never see the good in others. For them speaks the noble Sapia, exiled by her fellow-countrymen; her envy was such that she felt maddening joy when they were defeated by the Florentines. And others speak with tragic voices, while distant thunders remember the words pronounced by Cain after killing Abel. Because the first assassin of the biblical legend had to be an envious creature.

They all carry the punishment in their guilt. The Spartan Antisthenes, upon learning that others were envious of him, answered correctly: “Worse for them, they will have to suffer the double torment of their ills and of my goods. The only gainful ones are the envied men; it is pleasing to feel adored from the knees.”

The major satisfaction of the excellent man is to incite envy, stimulating it with his own merits, harassing every day with greater virtues, to feel the joy of listening to their prayers. Not to be envied is an unequivocal warranty of mediocrity.

Chapter VI

THE LEVELING OLDNESS

I. GRAY HAIR

To gray is a very sad thing; gray hair is Nature's message warning us of the sunset's proximity. And there is no remedy. To pull the first one. – Who has not done it?- it is like removing the clapper to the bell that plays the Angelus, pretending with this to stretch the day.

The visible gray hairs correspond to others more serious that we can't see: the brain, the heart, the whole spirit and all the tenderness, gray and fade at the same time that the hair. The soul of fire under years' ash is a literary metaphor, unfortunately uncertain. The ash chokes the fire and protects the embers. Ingenuity is the flame; the embers are mediocrity.

The general truths are not disrespectful; they leave a gap through which the particular exceptions escape. Why not speak up the heartbreaking conclusion? To be old is to be mediocre, with rare exceptions. The worse misfortune of a superior man is to survive himself, leveling himself with others. How many would commit suicide if they could notice that terrible change from the man who thinks to the man who vegetates, from the one who pushes to the one who is dragged, from the man who plows new grooves to the one who becomes enslaved to the footprints of routine! Old Age and mediocrity tend to be parallel miseries. The "genius and example till reaching his tomb", is a very rare exception in men of excellent wit, if they are old; this tends to be confirmed when they die on time before the fatal crepuscular opacity fogs up the spirit's radiance. In general, if they die late, a slow mist starts to veil their mind with the aches and pains of old age; if death is stubborn and does not come, the geniuses become strange to themselves, survival that can lead them to not understand their own work. It happens as it could to an astronomer who loses his telescope and starts to doubt his previous discoveries, seeing himself unable to confirm them with his unaided sight.

The decadence of the aging man is represented by a systematic regression of his intellectuality. At the beginning, aging "mediocritizes" every superior man; later, decrepitude inferiorizes the old man already mediocre. Such affirmation is a simple corollary of biological truths. The human personality is a continuous formation, not a fixed entity; it organizes and disorganizes, evolves and involutes, grows and shrinks, it intensifies and exhausts. There is a moment in which it reaches his maximum plenitude; after this time it is unable to grow and soon the initial symptoms of decline become manifest, the blinking of that interior flame that puffs out.

When the body refuses to serve all of our intentions and desires, or when these are measured in anticipation of possible failures, when can assert old age has begun. To stop to meditate or mull over a noble intention, is to kill it; ice treacherously invades the heart and tames the most independent personality. Routine is the mental stigma of old age; savings is a social stigma. Man ages when the utilitarian calculation replaces the youthful joy. Those who look to see if what they have will suffice for all of their anticipated future, are not young anymore; when they opine that it is preferable to have more than less, they are old; when their eagerness to possess exceeds their possibility to live, they are already morally decrepit. Avarice is an exaltation of selfish feelings proper to old age. Many centuries before the modern psychologists studied it, Cicero wrote definitive words: "I have never heard that an old man has forgotten where he has hidden his treasure" (De Senectude, c7). And it must be true, if such was said by who defended the charms and virtues of old age.

Grey hairs are avaricious and avarice is a sterile tree: Humanity would perish if it had to feed itself from its fruits. The bourgeois morality of saving has degraded entire generations and peoples; there are grave dangers in preaching it, since, as taught by Machiavelli, "It is more harmful the avarice of the citizens than the rapacity of their enemies."

That passion of collecting goods that are not enjoyed grows over the years, contrary to others. Who is tight-fisted in his youth, could kill for money in old age. Avarice dries the heart and closes it to faith, to love, to hope and to ideals. If a miser could have the sun, would leave the Universe in the dark to avoid spending some if his treasure. Besides clasping what he has, the greedy despairs for having more, without limit; and is more

miserable the more he has: to bury bags that he does not enjoy, renounces dignity or well-being; that eagerness to pursue what he would never enjoy constitutes the most sinister of miseries. Avarice, like degrading passion, equals envy. It is the moral pustule of the aging hearts.

II- STAGES OF DECADENCE

The individual personality is built through successive juxtapositions of experience. It has been described as a “stratification” of character; the word is exact and deserves to be saved for subsequent developments. In its primitive and fundamental layers lie the inclinations received through heredity: the “mentality of the species”. In the middle layers we can find society’s educational suggestions: social “mentality” In the superior strata bloom the recent variations and perfections of each, the personal features which are not collective patrimony: the “individual mentality.”

Just like in geological formations the deepest sedimentations contain the oldest fossils; the primitive foundations of the individual personality jealously guard the common capital to the species and to society. When the recently constituted strata disappear as a result of old age, the psychologist discovers, little by little, the child’s, the savage’s and the mediocre man’s mentality, whose vulgarities, simplicities and atavisms reappear as the gray hair replaces the normal coloration adorning the young scalp.

Inferior, mediocre or superior, every adult man crosses a stationary period, through which he perfects his acquired aptitudes, but does not acquire new ones. Later his intelligence enters its twilight. The bodily functions start to decay at certain age. Those declinations correspond to unavoidable processes of organic regression. The mental functions, just like others, decline when the cellular machinery of our nervous system starts to rust.

It is evident that the individual ignores his own crepuscule; no old man admits that his intelligence has declined. Who writes this today, will probably believe the contrary when he is older than sixty. But objectively considered, it is an indisputable fact, even if there could be discrepancy to point out the age at which aging ends up damaging our springs. It is obvious that for this function as for other organic functions, that age differs from person to person; the organic systems at which this involution is initiated are diverse. Some individuals age earlier through their digestive, circulatory or psychic organs; and there are some out there who conserve their functions beyond the common limits. Mental longevity is an accident; it is not the rule.

Unmistakable old age is the one that places more wrinkles in the spirit than in the forehead. Youth is not a simple matter of civil status and it can survive some gray hair: it is a gift of intense life, expressive and optimist. Many adolescents don't have it and some old men overflow with youth and freshness. There are men who have never been young; in their hearts, prematurely parched, the extreme opinions did not find reception in their hearts nor breathe the romantic exaggerations. In them, the only precocity is aging. There are, instead, exceptional spirits who maintain originalities until their last years, aging late. But, in some before, in some later, slowly or swiftly, time consummates its work and transforms our ideas, sentiments, passions, energies.

The process of intellectual involution follows the same path of its organization, but inverted. "Individual Mentality" disappears first, later the "social mentality" and at last the "species mentality". Old age starts by transforming every individual in a mediocre man. The mental decline, however, may continue beyond this stop. The brain cellular cog-wheels continue to get moldy, the neuronal associations weaken and the destructive work of decrepitude becomes deeper. The aches and pains continue to successively dismantle the character's layers, disappearing one after another their secondary acquisitions, the ones that mirror the social experience. The old man returns slowly to his primitive childish mentality, conserving the oldest acquisitions of his personality, that are the most consolidated. It is notorious that infancy and senescence touch each other; all the languages consecrate this observation in well-known sayings and adages. This explains the profound psychic transformations of old people: the total change of sentiments (specially the social and altruist), the progressive sluggishness to undertake new enterprises (with discreet conservation of the habits consolidated by old automatisms) and the doubts and backsliding of the most personal ideas (to first return to the average ideas of their environment and surroundings and later to those professed in their infancy or by their forbearers).

The best proof –that ignorants tend to dictate against science- is found in men of raised mentality and disciplined culture; it is commonplace in them, when reaching oldage, a radical change in opinions about the highest philosophical problems, as the abilities defined during their virile age decline.

III- BANKRUPTCY OF WITS

This picture is neither exaggerated nor schematic. The progressive nature of the process prevents noticing that evolution in the people close to us; it is as if a light were slowly dimmed to arrive to complete darkness without realizing the transition.

The individual differences are tacked on to the natural slowness of the phenomenon. The ones who only had acquired a mirror of the social mentality have little to lose in that inevitable bankruptcy: it is the impoverishment of a pauper. And when in full senescence, his social mentality is reduced to the species' mentality, nobody is surprised by that decline from poverty to misery.

In the superior man, be in talent or in genius, the damage is clearly visible. How could an old millionaire who passed by in tatters not call our attention? The superior man no longer is, he becomes leveled. His own ideas, organized in the perfecting period, tend to be replaced by common and inferior ideas. The genius – be it understood- is never late, even if its fruit may be revealed late; the works conceived during youth but written in maturity, may not show decadence, but this is always revealed in the works shaped in old age. We read the second part of Faust in respect for the author of its first part; we cannot leave without remembering that "never second parts were good", unappealable adage if the first was youth work and the second result of old age.

This psychological metamorphosis has been pointed out in Emmanuel Kant as a perfect example. The young Kant, truly "critical" had reached the conviction that the three great bastions of mysticism: God, Liberty and Soul's Immortality, were unsustainable to the "pure reason"; the old Kant, "dogmatic", found instead, that those three ghosts are postulates of the "practical reason" and therefore, indispensables. The more the return of Kant is preached, with the contemporary Neokantist westerly, the noisier and irreparable the contradiction between the young and old Kant becomes. Even Spencer, monist to extreme, ended up opening a door to dualism with its "incognoscible". Virchow established cellular pathology in his youth, without suspecting that he would end up disowning his naturalist philosopher's ideas. Just like him, many others decayed.

To cite some of those already dead, Lombroso was seen falling in childish ingenuities in his old age, explicable only by his mental weakening, to the point of crying while conversing with his mother's soul. James, who in his youth was a spokesman for evolutionist and biological psychology, ended up confused in moral speculations that only he understood. And, finally, Tolstoy, whose youth was lavished with admirable novels and writings that classified him as an anarchist writer, in his last years wrote articles that would not be signed by a vulgar gazette writer, to become extinguished in a mystical peregrination that ridiculed the last hours of his physical life. His mental life had finished long before.

IV- PSYCHOLOGY OF THE OLD-AGE

Sensitivity becomes blunted in the old men and means of communication with the surrounding world start to fail. The old man tends to inertia, looking for the least effort; just like laziness is an anticipated old-age, old age is laziness that fatally arrives at a certain time of life. Its characteristic is an atrophy of the noble elements and development of the inferior elements in the organism; a part of the capillaries is obstructed and reduce the blood flow to the tissues; the weight and volume of the central nervous system become reduced, like all the vital tissues: the flaccid musculature limits the ability to maintain the body erect; movements lose their agility and precision. The nutritive changes in the brain diminish and the chemical transformations become altered. Connective tissue proliferates and noble cells degenerate. Once the equilibrium of organs is broken, the functional balance is cannot subsist: the dissolution of intellectual and affective life follows that fatal course perfectly studied by Ribot in the final chapter of his Psychology of the Sentiments.

As men age, they become childish like, as much by their creative ineptitude as by their moral belittlement. To the expansive period, that of concentration follows: the incapacity for assault perfects defense. The physical insensitivity is accompanied by moral analgesia: instead of participating in other's pain, the old man ends up not even feeling his own; the anxiety to prolong his life appears to warn him that a strong emotion may spend his energy and he hardens against pain like the tortoise retracts beneath its shell when anticipates danger. Thus, ends up feeling an occult

hatred for all the live forces that grow and advance, a bad-blood against all the springs.

Old-age's psychology denounces obsessive and absorbent ideas. Every old man believes that the young despise them and wish his death to replace them, translating such mania as hostility towards youth and considering it much inferior to the youth of his time, judgment that he extends to new customs and habits when unable to adapt to them. Even in the small things demands the largest part, inhibiting initiative, disdaining hunches and scorning ideals, without remembering that once upon a time he thought, felt and did all which now he considers compromising and hateful.

This is the true psychology of the man who ages. Age "blunts or blocks the zeal, ardor fitness to create, discover or simply savor art, to keep curiosity awake." I leave out the rare exceptions that would demand, each of them, a special examination. For the majority of men, the vital weakening suppresses the taste for those superfluous things. Let's point out, also, the clear hostility towards innovations: new artistic forms, new discoveries, and new ways of analyzing or treating scientific problems. This fact is so notorious, that it needs no proofs. Ordinarily, in esthetics above all, each generation renounces the one that follows. The common explanation of this misoneism is the existence of intellectual habits already organized, that would be shaken by a violent contrast if a capacity for emotion and passion still existed. This is what is missing in the old, the result of their emotional life's sleepiness. Ribot adds that to that dissolution of superior sentiments follows that of all altruist and ego-altruist feelings, remaining until the end those selfish and egotistical sentiments, so predominant in the personality of the old. Themselves shipwrecked in ulterior senility.

The character's diverse elements dissolve in inverse order to that of their formation. The ones acquired towards the end are less active and leave shallow grooves, adventitious, uncoordinated. This is also revealed in the regression of senile memory; the ghosts of the first juvenile impressions continue rolling in the mind when the closest memories have already disappeared, those of the previous day. The lack of plasticity implies that the new psychic processes don't leave trace, or very weak, whereas the old ones have been recorded deeply and are erased only with the organs' destruction.

With the knowledge of the neurons in the young man and their ability to create new associations and connections, Ramon y Cajal would explain man's capacity of adaptation and its aptitude to change its ideological systems; the detention of those functions in the old, or in adults of brain atrophied by the lack of illustration or other causes, allows to understand immutable convictions, maladjustment to the moral environment and the misoneist aberrations. It is equally conceived, that the lack of association of ideas, intellectual clumsiness, imbecility, dementia, can develop when – for reasons more or less morbid- the articulation and association between neurons becomes weak, they abandon their interaction, or when memory partially disorganizes. To formulate this hypothesis, Ramon y Cajal has noted the greater conservation of juvenile memories; the networks of associations created long ago and exercised through the years, have undoubtedly acquired more force, as they were organized at a time in which the brain possessed its highest degree of plasticity.

Without knowing these modern data, Lucretius observed (III, 452) that science and experience can grow through life, but vivacity, speed, firmness and other praiseworthy qualities wither and languish as aging progresses:

> Ubi jam validis quassatum est viribus aevi corpus, et obtusis ceciderunt veribus artus, claudicate ingenium, delirat linguaque mensque.
>
> When the strength of time already wrecked body and blunt fell sputters limbs, limping character limps tongue and mind.

Montaigne, as an old man, estimated that at twenty, each individual has announced that what can be expected of him and affirmed that no spirit that remained dark till that age has become a beacon of light afterwards: "Si l'epine ne pique pas en naissant, a peine piquerat-t-elle jamais" (if the thorn does not spike and stimulate at young age, it will never do it later"), and adds that almost all the great deeds of History have been accomplished before the age of thirty (Essays, Book I, Chapter LVII).

At distances of centuries a spirit completely diverse arrives at the same conclusions: "The discovery of the second principle of modern energetic was accomplished by a young man: Carnot was eighteen years old when he published his memoir. Meyer, Joule and Helmotz were 25, 26 and 25 respectively; none of these great innovators had reached 30 when they

became renowned. The times in which their works appeared do not represent the moment in which they were conceived; years passed before they had sufficient development to expose their ideas and for them to acquire the means to publish their discoveries. The youth of these masters of Science is astounding. We are used to consider that Science is a privilege of advanced age, and it seems that these youngsters have lacked respect to the elders, allowing themselves to open new roads towards truth. People may say that the solution to those scientific problems by boys was a singular and exceptional accident; easy to prove that the same thing happens in all domains of science: the great majority of the works that pointed out new horizons were the work of young men and women who had just passed their twenties. This is not the place to search for the causes and consequences of this fact, but it is useful to remember it because even if pointed out many times, it is far from being recognized by those dedicated to educating the youth. The works of young men and women are of an innovating character; the mechanisms of public instruction should not be an obstacle for them, allowing them to develop their aptitudes in freely from early on, supporting them with superior institutes instead of exhausting them prematurely, as it occurs to a great number of original scientific talents." And such that their conclusions do not appear improvised, W Ostwald has developed them in his last book about the great men, where the problem of the juvenile genius is analyzed with experimental criteria.

For this reason, the academies are usually cemeteries where men who have ceased to exist for their science or their art are glorified. It is natural that to them dead and agonizing souls arrive: to accept a young spirit would imply to bury a live soul.

V- THE VIRTUE OF IMPOTENCE

It is true what is stated since Lucretius and Montaigne to Ribot and Ostwald, but the old men will not abandon their protests against the young, nor the latter will accept in silence the hegemony of gray hair.

Old men forget that they were young and these appear to ignore that they will be old; the road to tramp is always the same, from originality to mediocrity and from this to mental inferiority.

How could we be surprised, then, if the young revolutionaries end up as old conservative men? And why is it strange to see the religious conversion of the atheists when approaching the end of the road?

How could the active and enterprising man at thirty not be apathetic and prudent at eighty? How to be amazed that old age could make us avaricious, misanthropic and naggers when it gradually hinders our senses and our intelligence, as if a mysterious hand was locking one by one all the windows half closed in our surrounding reality.

The law is hard, but it is law. Birth and death are the inviolable terms of life: she tells us with a firm voice that the anomaly is not to die or to be born in the plenitude of our functions. We are born to grow; we grow older to die. All that Nature offers for our growth takes away preparing death.

However, the old protest that they are not respected enough, while the young despair because of the excessive respect. History belongs to all times. Cicero wrote his De Senectute with the same spirit that today Faguet writes some pages of his essay about La Vieillesse. The former complained that the old were not respected enough in the Empire; the latter quips that they are even less respected in democracies. Faguet's words surprise when he affirms that the old are not heard, pretending to see in this the negation of one more competence. Pleading that primitive peoples, like today among savages, the old men are the ones who govern: gerontocracy is explained there by experience which is the only science and the old men know it all, since any new case is familiar as they have seen hundreds or thousands. Faguet indicates that books in the hands of young people, is the enemy of the experience monopolized by the old. And he despairs because the old man has been ridiculed, committing the imprudence of judging him: "convenons de bonne grace qu'il prete a cela; i lest entete, il est maniaque, i lest verbeux, i lest contour, i lest ennuyeux, i lest grandeur, et son aspect est desagreable": no young man has written a more synthetic silhouette, included in his volume about the cult of incompetence. Faguet opines that the old are exiled from the contemporary mediocracies. Grave mistake, that only proves his old age.

Every society in decadence is conducive to mediocrity and enemy of any individual excellence; for this reason access to government is closed to the original youth, until they have lost their own edge, waiting that age will

level them, debasing them to the ways of thinking and feeling that are common to their social group. For this reason, the directive functions tend to belong to the mature age; the "public opinion" of the peoples, of the classes or of the parties, tends to be found in men who were superior and begin to decay, natural exponent of their mediocrity. At young age, they are considered dangerous; only in revolutionary times the young govern; The French Revolution was executed by them, like the emancipation of North and South America. Progress is an achievement of illustrated and daring minorities.

There is no lack of respect, as pointed out in their respective old age by Plato, Aristotle, Montesquieu, before Faguet. To affirm that through the road of old age one arrives to mediocrity, is the simple application of a general law that rules all living creatures and prepare them for death. Why surprise us of this mental decadence if we are used to seeing leaves change colors and trees become bare when autumn arrives, pursued by winter?

Let's admire the old men for the superiorities they had in their youth. Let's not make the simple mistake of hoping for a heroic, saint or genial old age after an equivocal youth, tamed and opaque; old age does not make flowers bloom where there were only weeds. It is more likely that it will mow excellence with its leveling sickle. The old representatives that ascend to the government and to dignities, after having spent their best years in inertia or orgy, on the green carpet or among whores, in the apathetic expectation or in the humiliated resignation, without a virile word and without a haughty gesture, avoiding the fight, shirking confrontation, fearing adversaries and renouncing dangers, do not deserve the trust of their contemporaries, nor have the right to canonize. Their grandiloquent words seem to be pronounced in falsetto and cause laughter. Men of elevated character do not insult life wasting their youth, nor trust to the uncertainty of gray hair the initiation of great enterprises that can only be conceived by fresh minds and accomplished by virile arms.

Virile experience complicates the foolishness of mediocre men, but can convert them in geniuses; maturity softens the perverts, making them useless for evil. The devil does not know more for his age than for being the devil. If he repents, is not for sanctity but for impotence.

CHAPTER VII

THE MEDIOCRACY

I- THE CLIMATE OF MEDIOCRITY

In rare moments, passion warms up history and idealisms become exalted: when nations are born and renewed. First is secret desire of liberty, later the struggle for independence, then the crisis of institutional consolidation, after that, vehemence of expansion or the strength of energies. The geniuses pronounce definitive words; statesmen execute their visionary plans; the heroes place their hearts in destiny's scale.

It is but fatal that peoples have long sleepy pauses. History does not know a single case in which lofty ideals work with continuous rhythm in the evolution of a race or peoples. There are hours of palingenesis and there are hours of apathy, with vigils and dreams, days and nights, springs and autumns, in whose infinite alternation the continuity of time is divided.

In some periods, the nation falls asleep within the country. The organism vegetates; the spirit drowses. Appetites harass the ideals, becoming dominating and aggressive. There are no stars on the horizon nor oriflammes in the bell towers. The peoples' cry is not perceived; the echo of great animated voices does not resonate. All crowd up around the official tablecloths to reach some of the crumbs of snacks. It is the climate of mediocrity. States become mediocracies, what inexpressive philosophers would prefer to term: "mesocracies".

The cult for truth, the eagerness to admire, the faith in firm beliefs, the exaltation of ideals, the abnegation and disinterest, all that is in the path of virtue and dignity enters the penumbra and gloom. In the very utilitarian diapason all the spirits are tempered. Speaking by sayings as Sancho Panza; Believing in catechisms, as preached by Tartuffe; living from records, as taught by Gil Blas. Everything vulgar meets fervent followers in the ones who represent the militant interests; their highest spokesmen become

slaves. They are actors to whom improvisation is forbidden: any other way they would break the mold to which the other pieces of the mosaic adjust.

Plato, without realizing, defined mediocracy as he intended to define democracy: “it is the worse of the good governments, but the best among the bad ones”. Many centuries have passed: the sentence conserves its truth. In the first decade of the Twentieth Century the moral decadence of the governing classes was accentuated. In each region, a group of freeloaders wields and controls the cogwheels of the official mechanism, excluding those who disdain complicity in their enterprises. Here upstart castes, there industrial unions, further afield factions of drivellers. They are sheaves and call themselves parties, attempting to disguise their monopoly of the State with ideas. Brigands who seek a safe crossroad to plunder society.

Politicians without shame have been around forever, in all times and under all regimens; but they find the best climate under bourgeoisies without ideals. Where all can talk, the illustrated keep quiet; the enriched ones prefer to listen to the vilest cheaters. When the ignorant believes he is on par with the studious, the brigand with the apostle, the stutterer with the eloquent, the brute to the dignified, merits scale disappears in an opprobrious leveling villainy. That is mediocracy: those who know nothing believe they are saying what they think, even if they only repeat dogmas or promote voracities. That moral mediocrity is more serious than the acclimation of tyranny; nobody can fly where all are creeping. It’s agreed upon to label hypocrisy as urbanity, affectation as distinction, timidity as culture, complicity as tolerance; the lie offers these equivocal denominations. And those who thus lie, are enemies of themselves and of their motherland; dishonoring their parents and their children, gnawing the common dignity.

In those periods of sluggishness, mediocracies venture through ignoble trails. The obsession of accumulating material treasures, or the brute eagerness of using them in idleness, erases all traces of dreams and reverie from the collective spirit. Countries are no longer homelands, any ideal seems suspect. The philosophers, the geniuses and the artists become superfluous; the atmosphere’s heaviness thwarts their wings and can no longer fly. Their presence mortifies the traffickers and all who work for profit, the slaves of savings or of greed. Spiritual endeavors are sniffed at; the climate not being conducive, their followers become numbered and do

not disturb the mediocracies; they are proscribed within their nations, which slowly kill their ideals by simmering, without the necessity of exile. Each man jailed among a thousand shadows that surround and paralyze him.

There have always been mediocre men. They are perennial. What changes are their prestige and influence. In the times of renewed exaltation, they are humble and tolerated; nobody sees them, and they do not dare meddle with anything. When the ideals become lukewarm and the quantitative replaces the qualitative, they become visible and their numbers rise, forming groups and herds. Their influence grows as the climate tempers; the wise man is equalized by the analphabet, the rebel by the lackey, the poet by the moneylender. Mediocrity condenses and becomes unchallengeable.

Brutes rise since geniuses stop blooming: creations and prophecies are impossible if they are not contained in the soul of their time. Aspiration to the best and betterment is not a privilege that belongs to all generations. After one that has realized a great effort, dragged or moved forward by a genius, the next one rests and can live from past glories, commemorating them without faith: factions dispute the administration, competing to debase all the dreams. Their decline is disguised with excessive pomp and words, any protest is silenced; the best intentions are proclaimed but abominable baseness is practiced; art is cheated, justice is betrayed; character is beguiled. All are deceived with everybody's consent; each man puts a price to his complicity, a reasonable price that oscillates between an employment and a decoration.

Rulers do not create such state of affairs and spirits: they represent it. When nations hit shoals, some faction seizes the cogwheels built or reformed by geniuses. Legislators bloom, archivists swarm and legions of officers appear: laws multiply, without strengthening their efficacy. Sciences become official mechanisms, institutes and academies where genius does not sprout and talent does not shine: its presence would humiliate with contrast force. Arts become industries promoted by the Estate, reactionary in its tastes and adverse to any anticipation of new rhythms or new forms; artists and poets' imagination seems to sharpen up in discovering the cracks of that forecast and filter through them. In such times, stars do not rise. They idle: society does not need them; their cohort of functionaries is sufficient. The level of rulers descends to mark zero;

mediocracy is a confabulation of zeros against units. One hundred clumsy politicians are not worth a fraction of a great statesman. Add ten zeros, one hundred, a thousand, all of mathematics and you will not have any quantity, even negative. Politicians without ideals mark an absolute zero in History's thermometer, maintaining themselves free of infamy and virtue, equidistant from Nero and Marco Aurelio.

A conservative apathy characterizes those periods; the anxiety for elevated things cools down and the eagerness for sumptuous formalisms prospers. The rulers who do not think appear prudent; the ones who do nothing title themselves restful; the ones who do not steal become exemplar. The concept of merit turns negative: shadows are preferred to men. What is sought after is originally mediocre or mediocrized by senility. Instead of asking for heroes, saints or geniuses, discreet administrators are reclaimed. But the statesman, the philosopher, the poet, the ones who accomplish, preach and sing some part of an ideal are absent. They have nothing to do.

The climate's tyranny is absolute: to level off or succumb. The rule knows few expressions in History. Mediocracies have always denied virtues, beauties and greatness. They offered hemlock to Socrates, the wooden cross to Christ, the dagger to Caesar, the exile to Dante, jail to Galileo and the bonfire to Bruno; and while they mocked those exemplary men, smashing them with their fury or arming against them some crazy arm, offering their servitude to stupid rulers or lending their shoulders to sustain the roughest tyrannies. At a price: that these guarantee to the contented classes the necessary tranquility to usufruct their privileges.

In those times of lenocinio / pimping, authority is easy to exercise: courts are full of subservient souls, rhetoricians who chat and profit from bread, of rookies who aspire to some crumbs and in whose consciences always hangs the ignominious delivery notes. Mediocracies are shored up by the appetites of those who are anxious to live from them and in the fear of those afraid of losing their pittance. Civil indignity is law in those climates. Every man loses his personality when they become a public officer: does not carry the visible chain on his foot, like the slaves, but drags it nevertheless, tied to his gut. Citizens of a Motherland are the ones able to live by their effort and without the official barley. When all is sacrificed to it, superimposing appetites to aspirations, the moral sense is degraded and

decadence is imminent. Searching remedies in the glorification of the past is useless. Peoples do not wake up from this slumber praising the past, but sowing the future.

II- THE MOTHERLAND

Nations are geographical expressions and States are forms of political equilibrium. A Motherland is a lot more and it is another thing: synchronism of spirits and hearts, uniform metal for effort and homogeneous disposition for sacrifice, simultaneity in the aspiration to greatness, in the shame of humiliation and in the desire and eagerness to glory. When that common hope is missing, there is no motherland, there can be: there must be common dreams, hanker great things together and to feel decisive and decided to realize them, with the certainty that when marching after an ideal, nobody will be left on the road counting their wounds. Motherland is implicit in the sentimental solidarity of a race and not in the confabulation of low politicians who thrive in their shadow.

It's not enough to accumulate riches to create a motherland: Carthage never became one. It was an enterprise. The gold mines, the feverish industries and the generous rains can make of any country a rich emporium: Ideals of culture are necessary to create a motherland within. The value of this concept is debased when it is applied to countries that lack moral unity, more akin to factories of native or exotic achievers than legions of dreamers whose ideals seem like an arch stretched towards a goal of common dignity.

The motherland has intermissions: its moral unity disappears in certain times of debasement, when the eagerness of culture and education are eclipsed by vile appetites of authority and enrichment. The remedy against that crisis of flatness is not in past fetishism, but rather all together seeding the future and all concurring in creating a new moral environment propitious to the culmination of virtue, of ingenuity and of character.

When there is no motherland, there cannot be a collective sentiment of nationality – distinct from the patriotic lies exploited in all nations by merchants and militarists-. Motherland is possible if it drives the rhythm and beat of peoples' hearts for a noble improvement and never for ignoble aggression that could hurt the same sentiment in other nationalities.

There is no lower way to love the motherland than hating the Motherlands of other men as if all weren't equally able of generating similar sentiments in their sons. Patriotism must be collective emulation such that the nation can rise to the virtues demonstrated by other better countries; there should never be collective envy that could damage others' superiority and prompt aloofness and decline in others to their previous low levels. Each Motherland is an element of Humanity; craving national dignity must be an aspect of our faith in human dignity. Each race rises to its highest level, as a Nation and by the effort of all they will raise the level of the species, as Humanity.

While a country is not a Motherland, its inhabitants do not constitute a Nation. The zeal of Nationality only exists in those who feel bound to pursue the same ideal. For this reason, it is deeper and vigorous in conspicuous minds; Nations more homogenous are the ones that count men able of feeling it and serving it. The meager capacity to forge ideals limits the brigand spirits' ability to pursue them; amoral, alien to the society in which they live and unable to conceive ideals; slaves and serfs have, barely, a natal country. Only the free and dignified man can have a Motherland.

They can have it; but not always, because there are times and epochs in which they exist in the imagination of few: one, ten and maybe one hundred chosen ones. She is then in that ideal spot in which the aspirations of the best men converge, of those who feel it sincerely. In those few, nationality is present and vibrates in all their fibers; the millions of inhabitants who eat and profit in that country remain alien to the eagerness and enthusiasm of those select few.

The uplifting feeling bursts forward in many young dreamers, but it remains rudimentary or distracted by the common appetites; in a few select ones it becomes dominant, displacing the herd's temptations. When venal interests surpass the ideals of the cult spirits, which constitute the soul of a nation, the national sentiment degenerates and becomes corrupt; the motherland exploited as an industry. When people live satiating gross appetites and nobody thinks in the poet's verses or the reflections and ponderings of a philosopher, the nation falls through the abysm. Citizens return to the condition of inhabitants. The Motherland returns to the condition of country.

This occurs periodically: as if the nation needed to blink in its gaze towards the future. All twists and falls, and the individual drive is replaced by the collective one. We could say that in the collective blame the individual responsibility disappears. When the group bends, like a ship changing directions, it seems that nothing will bend. Only the one who gets up and observes from another level those sailing below, appreciates their decline. When the moral miseries desolate a nation, the blame belongs to all, who for lack of culture and lack of ideals have been unable to love her as Motherland: to all who lived from Her without working for Her.

III- HERDS' POLITICS

Deep cause of that general contamination is, in our times, the parliamentary system's degeneration: all the weak forms of parliamentarism. In the past, it was believed that in order to govern, art and science were required; now it has been accepted that Gil Blas, Tartuffe and Sancho are the irrefutable arbiters of that science and that art.

Politics degrades itself and becomes profession. In the Nations without ideals, the subaltern spirits thrive with clumsy intrigues of antechambers. In the low tide, vulgarity rises and traffickers bog down. All excellence disappears, eclipsed by domesticity, and as a result, morale hostile to firmness and propitious to laxity and relaxation gains strength. The high roads drop and middens rise. Lauredals die out and cardizals multiply. Royalty rubs with scoundrels. Where all profit, nobody thinks; where all swallow, nobody dreams. What used to be a sign of infamy or cowardice becomes a title of shrewdness and trickery; what once killed, now vivifies, as if there was an acclimation to ridicule; debased shadows rise and pretend to be human; improbity peacocks and parades instead of being shamefaced and modest. What in Motherlands was shameful, in Nations is rewarded with honors.

Election days become crass wash outs of mercenaries or pugilism of adventurers. Innocent electors are in charge of their justification, and accept the parody as a party. Factions of professionals are adverse to all originalities. Illustrious men may become victims of votes: political parties adorn their lists with some respected names, feeling the need to hide behind the intellectual blazon of select men. Each herd forms a mayor state that

justifies its pretension of governing the country, disguising daring piracies with the pretext of sustaining the party interests. Exceptions are not tolerated as homage to virtues: Herds do not admire any superiority; they exploit the prestige of the house to allow their contraband goods. For each meritorious man, there are dozens of insignificant shadows.

Beyond those exceptions, who exist everywhere, the mass of "chosen by the people" is subservient. A bunch of dishonest, conceited and menial men. The first waste their fortunes to ascend to Parliament. Rich landowners or powerful industrial men pay gold for votes collected by crooks; shrewd men open their piggy banks to purchase the only diploma that is accessible to their amorphous mentality; enriched asses that aspire to be tutors of Nations, without more capital than their perseverance and their millions. They need to be somebody: and think they become so by joining the herds of pigs.

The dishonest are legions; they assault Parliament to surrender to lucrative speculation. They sell their votes to firms that bite the State's vaults; lavishing prestige to projects of big business with the State, charging their discourses by the minute: paying with destinations and official largesse to their voters, merchandizing their influence to obtain concessions in favor of their clients. Their political management tends to be calm: a business man is always with the majority, supports all governments.

Servile men hang around Parliaments due to the flexibility of their spines. Lackeys of great men, or blind instruments of their herds, they do not dare discuss the authority of those men or the objectives of herds. There is no demand of talent, eloquence or probity: the certainty of their panurgism is enough. They survive with the light of others, satellites without color and without thoughts, tied to the carriage of their chieftain, always ready to applaud when they speak and to rise when the time to cast votes arrives.

In some young democracies, that call themselves republics as a sign of derision, Congresses teem with tame men protected by the dominant oligarchies. Servile, effeminate, unconditional and obedient herds thrive: the majorities look to the pigman waiting for a wink or a sign. If one goes alone, he is lost. The ones who rebel are proscribed without appeal.

There are isolated cases of genius and character, dreamers of some apostolate or representatives of untamable yearnings; if time does not domesticate them, they serve others justifying them with their presence. Dreamers believe that merit opens the doors to debased Parliaments. The political parties –or in their names, the government- operate a selection among their members at the expense of merit or in favor of intrigue. A quantitative sovereign and without ideals prefers candidates with the same moral complexion: because of sympathy and convenience.

The most abstruse formulas of organic chemistry seem infantile babblings in mediocre Parliaments. The contempt of honest men does not faze them. They trust that the low level of the representatives will approve the folly of the represented. For this reason, useless men adapt wonderfully to the desiderata of universal suffrage.

The accomplices, big or small, aspire to become officials. Bureaucracy is a convergence of ambushing voracities. Since Human's Rights were invented, every imbecile knows them by heart to exploit them, as if equality before law implied an equivalence of skills and aptitudes. That desire to live at the expense of the state lowers dignity. Each elector that crosses the streets rushing, preoccupied, walking or driving, young, mature, at any time, you can bet is domesticating and degrading himself: he is seeking a recommendation or already has it.

Officials grow in the modern bureaucracies. Once upon a time, when it was necessary to delegate part of the functions of the monarchs, they chose men by merit, experience or fidelity. Almost all of them belonged to the feudal cast; and duties were linked to the cause of their monarchs. Along with it, small local bureaucracies formed. As the institutions of government grew, officials multiplied, becoming a class, a new branch of the dominating oligarchies. To prevent their becoming overweening, they regulated them to eliminate all initiative and choking them with tedious routine. Their eagerness of command gave birth to exaggerated submission. The parliamentary system enslaved the bureaucracy twice, with the executive and legislative branches. That game of bilateral influences converges to belittle the dignity of functionaries and officials. Merit is absolutely excluded; influence and contacts suffice. With these, one rises through equivocal roads. The characteristic of boorish people is to think they are suitable for all endeavors, as if good intention could save

incompetence. Flaubert told in eternal pages the story of two mediocre men who rehearse the assayable: Buvard and Pecuchet. Nothing they do is well done, but they give up nothing. They populate the mediocracies; they are functionaries of any function, believing themselves able organs for the most contradictories physiologies.

Immediate consequences of "functionalism" are servility and adulation. They exist since the existence of powerful and favorites.

The first one is observed under hundreds of forms, implicit in human inequality: wherever there have been different men, some were dignified and others domesticated.

Excessive restraint and the affectation to please the master engender damage of character. They are not offenses against the laws or vices for the moral of certain times: they are compatible with "honesty", but never compatible with "virtue".

Sensitivity to praise is legitimate in its origins. They are an indirect measure of merit; founded on esteem, recognition, friendship, sympathy or love. Sincere and selfless praise does not debase those who offer it nor offend whom receives it, even if unjust; it can be a mistake but not an indignity. Adulation instead, always is such: disloyal and selfish. The desire to be first in grace and confidence of the powerful induces to please them; the fawning's behavior looks at that and his slavish mood sacrifices everything. His intelligence only sharpens to sniff the master's desire. He subordinates his tastes to those of his owner, thinking and feeling as He orders: his personality is almost abolished. He belongs to that race of "happy cowards", as coined by Leconte de Lisle.

Adulation is an injustice. It deceives. The fawning is always despicable, even when he does as a sort of vulgar benevolence or by the desire to please at any cost. Racine, in Fedra, believed it to be a divine punishment:

"Detestables flatteurs, present le plus funeste

Que puisse faire aux rois la colere celeste."

"Detestable flatterers, offer the most baneful and disastrous thing

That can be trigger the king's celestial anger."

Not only the kings and powerful are flattered, but also the people are flattered. There are wretched toils of popularity, more degrading than servility. To obtain the quantitative favor of the mobs, lies of low praises disguised of ideals can be dispensed; more cowardly as they are addressed to the plebs unable to discover the whopper. To flatter the ignorants and deserve their applause, speaking ceaselessly of their rights but never of their duties, is the last renouncement to one's own dignity.

In the mediocre climates, while the mobs follow the charlatans, the rulers lend ears to the flatters. The conceited ones live fascinated by the siren that lulls them endlessly, stroking their shadow; they lose all criteria to judge others and their own behavior; intrigue imprisons them; the adulation of the servile drags them to commit ignominious acts, like those women who show off their beauty and end up lending it to those who corrupt them with excessive adulation. The true merit is taken aback by adulation: it has its pride and its modesty, like chastity. Great men naturally speak of themselves praise or commendations that in others' lips would make them blush; great shadows enjoy hearing praise they fear not to deserve.

Mediocracies foment that vice of servility. Anybody who thinks with his own head, has a haughty heart and runs away from the quagmire where the vile ones prosper. "The excellent man" –wrote La Buyere- "cannot adulate; believes that his presence importunates the courts, as if his virtue or talent were a reproach to those who rule." And those who pale before his merits take advantage of his seclusion and withdrawal, as if there was a perfect compensation between ineptitude and rank, between domesticity and progress.

From time to time some of the best rise among all and speaks the truth, as he knows it and as he can, to save it from extinction and to avoid misrepresentation, transmitting it to posterity. It is the civic virtue: the ignoble is rightly qualified; the spirits would lose the notion of indignity otherwise. The Tartuffes, enemies of all original stellar light and every sonorous word, cross themselves before the heretic that returns their names to the surrounding goods. If it depended on them, society would become a mute's cave, whose silence would not interrupt any vehement clamor and whose shadow would not scratch the radiance of any star.

Every idealist has read with lyrical emotion the three admirable stories recounted by Vigny in his inmortal Stello. To have an Ideal is a crime that is not forgiven by mediocracies. Gilbert dies, Chatterton dies, Andre Chenier dies. All three are assassinated by Governments, with different weapon depending on the regimens. The idealist is immolated in the absolutist empires the same as in the constitutional monarchies and bourgeois republics.

Who lives for an ideal cannot serve any mediocracy. All conspires in them for the thinker, the philosopher and the artist to deviate from their path; and watch out! If they stray from it, they are lost forever. For this reason they fear politicking, knowing that it is the nectar of the mediocre mobs. They could fall prisoners in their spider web.

But when a different climate reigns and destiny carries them to power, they govern against the servile and vulgar men; breaking the monotony of history. Their enemies know it; a genius has never been elevated by mediocracies. They arrive against them, despite them, to dismantle them when a future is prepared.

IV- THE ARCHETYPES OF MEDIOCRITY

The pro-men of mediocracies are equidistant from the legendary barbaric – Tiberio or Facundo Quiroga- and the transmuting genius –Marco Aurelio or Domingo Sarmiento-. The genius creates institutions and the barbaric violates them: the mediocre men respect them, impotent to forge or destroy. Elusive to glory and rebels to infamy, they are recognized by an unequivocal circumstance: their assistants don't dare to call them geniuses fearing ridicule and their adversaries could not line them up with the imbeciles without flagrant injustice. They are perfect in their climate: They get around History at the mercy of one hundred complicities and in their persona merge up all the attributes of the environment that embosses them. Softened up by equivocal military hierarchies, by opaque university titles or the starched improvisation of upstart family lines, they preen in their spirit the routines and prejudices that debase the beliefs of the dominant mediocrity. Always at short step; their march cannot ever compare to the flight of condors nor the creeping of a serpent.

All the herds inflate some specimen predestined to possible culminations. They select the finished prototype among those who share their passions or voracities, their fanaticism or their vices, their prudence or their hypocrisy. They are not the privilege of such a cast or party: the lightness of their blockhead floats in all the political swamps. They think with the head of a herd and feel with their heart. Products of their climate, they are irresponsible: yesterday because of their hollowness, today because of their preeminence, tomorrow because of their sunset. Always toys of others' will. Among them republics choose their presidents, tyrants search their favorites, kings find their ministers and parliamentarians find their cabinets. Under all regimens: in the absolute monarchies and in the oligarchic republics. Every time the spiritual temperature of a race, a nation or a cast declines, the obtuse and senile find a propitious climate. Mediocracies avoid the summits of abysms. Restive under the meridian sun and timorous in the night, they search for their archetypes in the shadows. They fear originality and youth; they adore the ones who will never be able to fly or whose wings are mildewed and decaying.

Adventitious packs of mediocre men, linked by common appetites, dare call themselves parties. They ruminate a creed, feign an ideal and recruit a host of lackeys. That is enough to dispute elbow to elbow grabbing government sinecures. Each one elaborates his lie, raising it as infallible dogma. The villains summate their efforts to exalt the pro-manliness of their ghost: they call lyricism their ineptitude, décor their vanity and consideration their laziness, prudence their pusillanimity, faith their fanaticism, equanimity their impotence, distraction their vices, liberality to their vagrancy and maturity to their wilting. The time favors them: the shadows stretch as the crepuscule advances. At a certain time, illusion blinds many, silencing all truthful dissent.

The collective irresponsibility erases the individual quota from the mistake: nobody blushes when all the cheeks can reclaim their part in the common shame. From those hubbubs float one or other archetypes, although not always the less useless. They live a few years in ambush, hiding behind political rancor or mundane prestige. Meanwhile, they lay lethargic by irredeemable ineptitudes, pretending to be outlawed by mysterious merits. They claim against abuse of power, aspiring to commit them themselves for their own benefit. On the downswing, the rebels

continue the mutual trumpery and resignation to fasting does not diminish the magnitude of their appetites. They wait their turn, tamed under the tourniquet. They repeat De Maistre's maxim: "Savoir attendre c'est le grand moyen de parvenir." "Knowing how to wait is the great way to achieve."

The patient expectation converges in the least restless. Rarely a superior man shakes them with a vigorous wrist, making them dancing puppets that thrive in his shadow; when that absolute denominator is missing, they deorbit like asteroids of a planetary system whose sun extinguishes and dies. All then confabulate in tacit transaction, lending their shoulder to the ones who can tolerate more praise in just equivalence to old merit. The group inflates them with solidarity of logia; each accomplice becomes a thread in the spider web stretched to capture the government.

The selection of the oligarchic factions and the pompous conceit of the mediocre man they enshrine. These encomiastic men, committed to cleanse it from all sinful stain, try to obstruct the truth calling romanticism their reiterated incompetence for all enterprises. Others call pride their vanity and idealism their sloth; but time dissipates the ambiguity, restoring the name to those two vices united in the same trunk: pride is compatible with idealism, but it is the antithesis of vanity and idealism is the opposite of laziness and sloth.

The great men, repoussed with tin, their accomplices end up quicksilvering with demulcent words. Their scourges come to seem coquetries, like courtesans' wrinkles. Anointing them arbiters of order and virtue, they declare proscribed their old pustules; unconditional support for the most turbid regimens. The lips of flatterers drink from that water of Leteus which erases the memory of the past; they do not realize that after lapping an entire life in vice, all puritanism smells of benzene, like the gloves that pass through a cleaner.

Where oligarchies thrive disguised under democratic costumes those peacocks prosper, tensed by vanity; a mischievous boy would deflate them by pinching them on passing, disclosing the absolute nothingness that dwells in their interior. Empty.

The resigned passivity explains some culminations: the future of some archetypes is predicated in being admired against others. They flee to aggrandize themselves. After many decades of marching, they do not erase

their guilt; in their rhythm an inveterate pusillanimity is discovered which shuns skirmishes with enemies who have humiliated them until they bled. There cannot be virtue without gallantry; and this is not demonstrated by those who avoids with shaky departures the battle offered to their dignity.

That apprehensiveness does not represent the classic valor of the American colonels, nor it appears consistent with the gesture of a lion crouched to jump better and farther. They tramp and knock about with the "gift of patience of the opportunist batrachian", discussed by Ramos Mejia. The dignified man can remain silenced when receiving a wound, fearing perhaps that their disdain may exceed the offence; but when the sentence arrives, and it arrives in a style never used to adulate nor to beg, more hurtful than a hundred swards. Each verb is an arrow whose reach depends on the elasticity of the bow: the moral tension of dignity. Time does not erase a single syllable of dignified speech.

The archetypes tend to break their humble silences with harmless verbal pyrotechnics; from time to time the accomplices preach some mysterious lucubration stuttered before assemblies that have not listened to them. They don't try to maintain a reputation to adorn them: they desert Parliament the same day they were elected, as if they feared exposure and compromising the businessmen of their same reputation.

The inflation of these air balloons becomes complete once they are entrusted to subaltern festivals' diplomacies, in whose sumptuous pomp they display their hollow vanity. Their accomplices suspect some diplomatic talent or internationalist insight, complicating them in lustrous canonries where they shut down in lukewarm gloom, next to the shine of their oldest collaborators. Never discouraged, the oligarchies continue to pamper these monstrosities, hoping they will hit the nail in the head after hitting the horseshoe a hundred times. Anointed emissaries before a sister nation, their sacristy's casuistry poisons deep emotions, as if inextinguishable weeds germinated magically from the nations' hearts.

Archivists and paper pushers confabulate to induce the fervor of the ingenuous and to capture the trust of the routine men, converting into praises their most acidic vinegars, as if they were able to mortgage their wit discounting future sinecures. They fill with vain lies the fool's hollowness,

without suspecting the insufficiency of the trickery. The turkey does not look like an eagle nor the steed like a mule: a quick glance is sufficient.

Their negative influence seduces the domesticized characters: they don't think, don't steal, don't oppress, don't dream, don't kill, don't skip mass. What else? When the factions forge the Phoenix they elevate it as their perfect symbol. They have cosmetics for their wrinkled physiognomies: the grandiloquent rancidity of programs at whose footnote Berthold's signature could be found if the fools did not disclose the prudent reticence of Tartuffe. It is preferable if they are full of vulgarities and written in deplorable style; they please the clientele even more. An abstract program is perfect: it appears idealist and it does not blemish the ideas that each accomplice appears to have. Ninety nine out of every hundred repeat the same lie: the greatness of the nation, the citizenry rights and the administrative morality. All, if it is not customary shamelessness, is the result of affecting foolishness: simulates to say much but means nothing. The fear to concrete ideas hides under the mask of civic vagueness.

They have not shame of climbing the ladders of power astride the ignominy. They obey any villainy converging with their object: when they speak of civism their breath reeks of the original swamp. Their moral hides the vices for the simple fact of using and taking advantage of them. Pushed through twisted roads, they continue to sow in the same furrows. To take advantage of the undeserving, they have had to meekly humiliate them; the honors that are not deserved must be paid with debasements. "Those conceived in an impure womb cannot be virtuous", the Scriptures say; the ones who rise closing their eyes and mixing themselves up in dunghill's tricks, suffering the abuse of clumsy and fool men, lying to themselves to fulfill the shallow objectives of their lives, unable to redeem themselves from the original sin, although like insubordinate Fausts, they pretend to escape the hex of their Mephistopheles.

The people ignore them; separated by the zeal of the factions. To protect themselves from prying ailments they shy away from contact: as if from close-up they could not resist the influence of the curious. They remain oblivious to every thrill of the race. On some occasions, the mobs can be their accomplices; never the people. And they can't be; as in the mediocracies the people disappear. They consent because they do not exist, substituted by thriving mobs.

Depositories of the soul of nations, peoples are distinct entities with parties. It is not sufficient to be a multitude to be a nation.

The people embody the very consciousness of the future destinies of a nation or of a race. In some countries, an ideal converts them in Nations and it resides in the moral convergence of those who feel the motherland higher than oligarchies or sects. The people –antithesis of all parties- is not counted by numbers. You can find it where a single man rises over mediocrity; facing domesticated or fanatical mobs that single free man, he alone, he is all: People and Nation and Race and Humanity.

The archetypes of mediocrity pass through History with the superficial pomp of fugitive shadows. Insults or praise never reach their ears. They are never called “heroes” or “tyrants”; in the popular fantasy they awaken a uniform echo, that is repeated everywhere: “the Fool!” in a synthesis more definitive than a headstone. The psychological trinomial is simple: vanity, impotence and favoritism.

They live of fuss that only obeys forms. The austere simplicity of the gesture is an attribute of men; the sumptuousness of appearances is award of shadows. After incubating their desire, trembling of humility before their accomplices, befog of smokes and mirrors, full of fatuities; they forget that bloating and become conceited by a rank is to confess oneself inferior to it. They accumulate elaborate artifices hallucinating domestic imaginations; surrounding themselves by lackeys, adopt complicated nomenclatures, multiply the expedients and documentation swaggering around luxurious trains, navigating in grand ocean liners, dreaming with great receptions abroad. They offer both flanks to the scoffers’ giggly irony, coating all with a veneer of second-hand lavishness that recalls the courts and lordships of operetta. Their melodramatic emphasis would fit characters of Hugo and would tickle Stendhal’s egotism.

In their contemplative hedonism, there is no space for ambition, which it is energetic effort to increase works by one’s merits. The ambitious wants to ascend, to wherever his own wings can lift him up; the vain man believes himself to be in the most supreme summits coveted by the others. Ambition is a beauty among all passions, while vanity does not debase it. Hence that it is respected in the geniuses and ridiculed in fools.

Full of permanent big-sounding titles, they suspect that ideals exist out there and feign to be their defenders; becoming the most conformed to the moral of their mediocracy. Sometimes, they suspect the truth, because the truth eventually gets everywhere, more subtle than adulation; but they mutilate it, weaken it and corrupt it with accommodations, with crutches, with repairs that disguise. In some cases, Truth is stronger and becomes self-evident unwillingly, which is their punishment. They pretend to have good intentions when they master less and less energy to convert them in deeds; their innate dullness is transmuted in puritan cackle. Their ineptitude becomes laughable in their guise of idealism; the vague principles applied to the rhythm of opportunistic conveniences are hateful and contemptible. Time discovers the ones who have their moral in pieces to show off, even if they would never cut a section of their fabric to cover up their mediocrity.

They are tributaries of the seventh capital sin: in their impotence there is laziness. They renounce authority and maintain the pompous attitude; the former could blemish merit, the latter adorns vanity. They like idling; desist of doing the little they could; avoid any firm labor; run away from any combat and declare themselves spectators. They can practice evil by inertia and good by mistake; surrendering to the events by their incapacity to direct them. “Les paresseux” -said Voltaire- “ne sont jamais que des gents mediocres, en quelque genre que ce soit”. “The lazy are never more than mediocre people in whatsoever genre they apply themselves”. As detestable as rulers are, they are never more so than when they do not govern. The tyrant’s evil is a visible enemy; the inertia of the sluggards, instead, implies a mysterious relinquishment of the organ’s function, death of authority by an inaccessible cachexia to remedies. It is great unconsciousness to govern peoples when illness or old age deprive man of his wisdom.

The lack of intrinsic inspirations becomes sensitive to the coercion of the conspirators, to the intrigue of domestic men, to the flattery of the palace goers, to the constraints of “cotahures”, to the intimidations of hacks, to the influences of the sacristies and vestry. His behavior reveals fickleness with the few that lurk in the shadows; and his grandiose charge against the windmills is not enough to hide it. When they claim the power, they renounce of fact, convinced of their inability to use it; they give themselves to the course of the estuary, as emerging swimmers. Riders of foals whose prancing and jumping ignore, closing their eyes and dropping the reins: that

inability to grasp them with their inexpert hands, calling it submission to democracy.

Favoritism is their slavery against a hundred interests that beset them; they ignore the feeling of justice and the respect for merit. The true just resists the temptation to not be when he may have a benefit; the mediocre man always yields. Professes an abstract equity in cases that do not hurt the value of his accomplices, but complicates himself in all his devilries. There absolutely can never be justice in choosing the lackey to the dignified, the oblique to the straight, the ignorant to the studious, the intriguing and conniving to the gentleman, the coward to the brave. That is the moral corruption of the mediocracies: putting influence before merit. In Favoritism those who tread firmly get bogged down and the ones who creep softly advance: as in quick sands. When the secret sins, mistakes and misses are thrown on the archetypes' faces, they humbly argue that they are not infallible; but their vileness is manifested in their underlying their apology with tempting offers, used to trade honor. Those who confuse diamonds with swill cannot be judges; when the responsibility to govern is accepted "to err is a fault", as sentenced by Epictetus. Mediocracies ignore that dignity never kneels at the feet of the powerful.

They frequently repeat the legendary Midas trial. Pan dared compared his flute of seven reeds to Apollo's lyre. He proposed a contest to the god of Harmony and as referee the old Phrygian king. From Pan resounded the rustic chords and Apollo sang to the beat of his divine chants. They all decided that the flute was incomparable to the lyre, unanimous all but the king, who claimed victory for the former. Suddenly within his hair two miraculous ears grew; Apollo was avenged and Pan sought refuge in the shadows. The judge, confused, wanted to hide the ears behind his crown. He showed them to one of his butlers; then ran to a distant valley, dug a well and shared his secret there. But truth cannot be buried. Rosebushes bloomed and stirred by the breezes, they eternally repeat that Midas had asses' ears.

History punishes as severely as the legend: a page of chronicle lasts longer than a rosebush. Nobody asks if the crucifiers of Christ, the arsonists of Bruno and the scoffers of Columbus were knaves or villains. The conviction is the same and indelible. Justice is respect for merit. A Marcus Aurelius knows that in each generation there are ten or twenty privileged

spirits, and his genius is to promote them all; one Sancho Panza excludes them from his island, using only the domesticated ones, that is, the worst of character and morality. The ones who listen to the servile without interrogating the worthy are always unjust. The ones who deserve justice never ask for favors. Nor they accept them. They find it natural that the ones with probity prefer their kin; it is accurate that "the bourgeois' dullness, mortified by superiority's natural pride, looks to consecrate his match, whose access is easy and in whose psychology finds the means of being satisfied and understood." Time comes when the injustices of the rulers are paid with formidable compounded interests, irretrievably. Made to one alone, they threaten all the best; to let them go unpunished means to become their accomplice. Sooner or later the confusing accounts are settled, though their mistakes are never forgotten; the archetypes of mediocracies learn firsthand that a horseshoe can be lost by a simple nail.

As to Midas the divine Apollo, the dignified punish the scoundrels and miscreants with the perennity and durability of words; they may be wrong because to be wrong is human; but if they tell the truth, it lasts in time. This is their sword; rarely blandished. Because a frequently unsheathed weapon becomes dull rapidly: if they do, it goes straight to the heart, such as the one described in the famous ballads. And lackeys' rancor demonstrates the safety tip that plays the master.

To be complete, they are sensitive to all fanaticisms. Most pray with the same lips that they use to lie, as Tartuffe; uncertain to face on Earth the sanction of the worthy, they would like to postpone judgment for heaven. If it were in their power, they would cut the tongues to the sophists and the hands to the writers; they would shut libraries to avoid conspiracy from original wits and free spirits. They prefer flattery from the ignorant to advice from the wise. They underlie all dogmas. If in the military, they use a scapular instead of the sword; if politicians, they consult the Monita to interpret the Nation's Carta Magna. Under their rule, hypocrisy – worse than shamelessness- becomes a system.

In this incessant combat, renovated in Ibsenian dramas, the amorphous become pillars of society and the one who undresses a shadow seems a seditious enemy of the people. All of those aware, pound on their chest and thrive. The hosts of sacristy grow and grow, absorbing, mining,

widening: as a moral herpes which silently enlarges until ignominiously stain the physiognomy of an era.

Mediocracies deny their archetypes the right to choose their opportunity. They observe them in government when their body falters and their brain shuts down: they want the useless or blunt. Men repudiated in their youth, are enshrined in old age: at that age when good intentions are tired of bad habits. They choose those who enjoy enslaving their belly, eating their fill and drinking until becoming stunned, devastating their health in white nights, debasing their dignity in the insolvency of the green baize, becoming unfit for any continued and fruitful effort preparing those decrepitudes that fossilize kidney and liver. That is the best guarantee for the ordinary herd; his hatred of originality impels him toward men who start mummifying in life.

While old age erases the last personal traits of archetypes, their accomplices conspire to hide their progressive softening, thus relieving them of all fatigues and inoculating naïve fictions. Gradually the old crock flees his natural residence and isolates himself, haggles the occasions to pose himself in full light, displayed in small windows, where peacocks can look, from a distance, a hundred eyes of Argos planted on his tail. Uncertain to think, they need more than ever the aromatic smoke of all censers: flattery leads to covering them up with lubricants. The apologies are redoubled as they disappear, the brain damaged by shameful illnesses contracted in brothels of courtesans.

Crepuscule becomes implacable, simmering, drop by drop, as fate would lay bare its emptiness, piece by piece, showing it to the most stubborn, who could doubt whether to die suddenly, without that slow fading. They are shadows in the service of their armies. Although not living for them, displaying themselves from afar to attest that they exist, and avoiding even the rush of air that could fold them as an abandoned catalog sheet outdoors.

Although faint they cannot abandon the load; in vain remorse will repeat in their ears the classic words of Propertius: " It is shameful to load the head with a bundle that cannot be carried: soon knees, dodging the weight are bent"(III, IX, 5). The archetypes feel their bondage; but they should die there, guarded by accomplices who fed their vanity.

The houses of government can be their coffin; factions know it and dispute their vices, which they stalk. Their names are listed in the chronologies; disappear from history. Their descendants and beneficiaries struggle in vain to extend their shadow and live from it. It is enough that a free man denounces them for posterity to shroud them; a single word is enough –if it is virtuous, stoic, incorruptible, determined to sacrifice without looking back just to be loyal to his dignity- a single word is enough to erase adulations, in vain entrenched in the funeral hour. Some full diners, unable to refer to what they were, dare praise what they could have been... They believe that hope dies as if it was possible in bodies mined by the perpetual worry of youth and sugary attitude of old age.

It is natural that each die with his herd: Several take turns in each time of gloom and shadow. Mediocracy throws and strips them as old cards whose letters are already marked by the gamblers, entering to carve with other new, neither better nor worse. The worthy, outside the game whose traps they ignore, turn away from all cliques who thrive in the shadow of Nation; They cultivate their ideals and light a spark as they can, waiting or preparing other moral climate. And they do not stain their lips naming the archetypes: it would be, perhaps, immortalizing them.

V- THE ARISTOCRACY OF MERIT

Has the progressive advent of democracy, allowing equality of most, possibly hampered the culmination of the best? It is immaterial whether it is monarchies or republics; The XIX century began to unify the essence of political regimes, leveling all systems, gentrifying them. An eminent thinker underlined this truth: mediocracy does not tolerate illustrious exceptions. If the genius is a magnificent soliloquy, a voice of nature speaking to a whole nation or a race, is it not an excessive privilege? - He asks himself- that he hollows his voice on behalf of everybody? Democracy disowns such sovereigns who soar without plebiscites and do not argue divine rights. What was Verb in the genius now becomes Word and is distributed among all who together, believe they reason better than one. Civilization seems to lead to that slow and gradual banishment of the extraordinary man, widening and illuminating mediocrities. When most did not know how to think, it was just that one would do it for all: ability exposed to dangerous excesses. But the providential man becomes unnecessary as most think and

want. "In such dissemination of sovereignty: what need is there of great epics designed, made or written?" That seems, temporarily, the formula of leveling, and could be translated: to the extent that the democratic regime spreads, the role of superior men become restricted.

It would be an incontrovertible and definitive truth, if equalization were a natural orientation of History and if so, it were carried out with constant rhythm, without a stumble, smoothly. And it is not like that. It has never been; nor will it be, it seems. Nature opposes all leveling, seeing death in equality, for moral and structural progress human societies need more the Genius than the jerk and talent rather than mediocrity. History does not confirm the presumption of equality: does not abolish Leonardo to deify Panza nor crushes Berthold to worship Goethe. Both have their reasons for living, no one prospers in the climate of the other. The genius is as irreplaceable in his opportunity as the mediocre man in his; one thousand, one hundred thousand mediocre men would not accomplish that of a genius. Idealists who precede them or follow them cooperate to their work and accomplishments. Never the conservative, who are their natural enemies, nor the humdrum masses, who can be their instrument but never their guide.

It is ironic to repeat that States never need the great governor. The cult of mediocre but honest rulers belongs to the merchants who fear the bad, without conceiving the superior. Why would History disown the genius, the saint and the hero? In the solemn hours the Nations and their peoples expect it all from their great men, but in decadent times vulgar ones are enough. There is a climate that excludes the genius and seeks the fatuous; in the crepuscular dullness, while Academies fill with myopic and officials, governing the State's charlatans. But there is another atmosphere in which they are not useful; then stars fill the horizon. In the storm a Sarmiento takes the helm and pilots peoples towards their Ideal; at dawn finds an Ameghino at the distance and discovers fragments of Truth in formation. And still vary in their domains; formed in his thereabouts, like the halo around the stars, a particular atmosphere where his word resonates and his spark illuminates: the climate of genius. And one thinks and does: marks an evo. To the one who says "Equality or death" nature retorts "equality is death". That dilemma is absurd. If it were possible constant leveling, if the differential and original individuals had all ever succumbed, Humanity

would not exist. It could not have existed as the climactic end of biology. Our species has emerged from the preceding ones as a result of natural selection; there is evolution only where the variations of individuals can be selected. To match all men would deny progress of the human species, denying civilization itself. Is the current and contingent fact: Has the progressive advent of the democratic regime, in monarchies and republics, favored its public decline over the last century? Practically, democracy has been a fiction until now. It is a lie of some who claim to represent all. Although Lamartine, Heine and Hugo believed in it for a few moments, nobody more disloyal to the verb of the universal equivalence than the idealistic poets; Most are openly hostile. Another thing is the presentation of the problem. Simple.

So far there has not been an effective democracy. Regimes that adopted such name were fictions. The alleged democracies of all time have been professional confabulations to take advantage of the masses and exclude eminent men. They have always been mediocracies. The premise of this lie was the existence of a "people" capable of assuming state sovereignty. There is no such a thing: the poor and ignorant masses have not had, until now fitness to govern themselves: They have changed shepherds.

The greatest theoreticians of democratic ideals have been individualists and supporters of natural selection: they pursued the aristocracy of merit against the privileges of caste. Equality is a mistake or a paradox, depending on the case. Democracy has been a mirage, like all abstractions that populate the fantasies of dreamers or form the capital of the mendacious. The village and the people have been absent from her.

The aristocratic castes are no better, in them there are crises of mediocrity as well and become mediocracies. Democrats pursue justice for all and are wrong to search for it in equality. Aristocrats seek privilege for the best and end up reserving it for the most inept. The former erase the merit in leveling all; the latter scoff that merit attributing it to a caste. Both are, in fact, enemies of all natural selection. It’s the same if the peoples are tamed by emblazoned factions or upstarts: in both are proscribed dignity and ideals. Just as the titled democracies usually are not, alleged aristocracies cannot be. Merit encumbers in the Courts as in the Taverns.

All aristocracy could have been selective in its origin, it usually is. It is respectable to initiate with one's merits a lineage or ancestry. Human inequality is evident in every time and place; there are always men and shadows. The men who guide shadows are the Natural Aristocracy of their time and their right is indisputable. It's fair because it is natural. Instead, the concept of the traditional aristocracies is ridiculous: they conceive society as reserved a booty reserved for a caste, which enjoys its benefits without being composed of the best men of their time. Why the relatives, friends and lackeys of those who were once the fittest should continue to participate and enjoy power they have not helped create? In the name of inheritance and pedigree?

If skills are inherited, that privilege would be useless and they could renounce it. If it is not inherited, it is unfair and they must lose it. It is better that they lose it. All hereditary nobility is the antithesis of natural aristocracy; with the passage of time it becomes its most powerful obstacle. The divine right invoked by some is a lie; the same as the rights of man, invoked by others. Aristarchus and demagogues are equally mediocre and preclude the selection of superior aptitudes, leveling all originality, restraining ideals.

A concession could be made. Countries without aristocratic castes are more conducive to "mediocrization"; therein oligarchies of upstarts form, which have all defects and presumptions of nobility, without possessing their qualities. In their improvisation lacks the mentality of great lord, composed of attributes forged in a culture of centuries: there are, no doubt, quality people and men who have class like pedigree racehorses. They are more elusive to debasement. In their prejudices dignity may have a bigger share than in the upstarts. It is a difference that preserves them from many debasements. Is it better to obey breeds used to the routine of command or to gangs undermined by habits of servitude?

The traditional privilege of blood irritates Democrats and numerical voting privileges abhor to the aristocrats. The golden cradle does not give aptitudes and neither gives them the ballot box. The worst way to combat the democratic lie would be to accept the aristocratic lie; both are cases of identical ineptitude with different insignia. The inferior masses which could be the "people" -and the excellent men of each society which are the "natural aristocracy" – often remain alien to their strategy.

Among the Democrats full of “equality” fit audacious lackeys who pretend to supplant their masters with the help of fanaticized mobs; among the aristocrats moldy of tradition there are conceited men who crave to reduce their servants with the help of the meritorious ones. History always repeats itself: the masses and idealists are scapegoats in these disputes between feudal lords and the bourgeoisie of frock-coat.

The “mediocratic” degeneration, characterized by Faguet as a "cult of incompetence" does not depend on the political regime, but the decadent moral climate of the times. It heals when its causes disappear; never due to legislative reforms, (absurd to expect from their own beneficiaries). In vain they are tested by fools or simulated by knaves: laws do not create a climate. Effective law is a concrete result of morality.

The passionate protest of idealists may be a cry of alarm, launched in the shade; but the dream of exalting democracy is illusory in times of moral domesticity and satiety. Factions prefer to hear the false idealism of their aged fetishes, as if old wineskins could hold the new wine. Better to wait for better times, without excessive pessimism, with the certainty that the reaction inevitably comes at a certain time: the superior men anticipate it, guarding their dignity and working for their ideal. When the mediocracy exhausts the last resources of their incompetence, capsizes. Catastrophe returns its rank to merit and calls for the intervention of genius.

The very mediocratic stranding contributes to restore, from time to time, the vital forces of each civilization. There is a vis medicatrix naturae correcting the bucking of nations: the intermittent formation of successive aristocracies of merit.

The privilege disappears and the moral direction of society returns to the best hands. Its legitimacy is respected, those rare individual qualities that apply to the original orientation towards new and fruitful ideals are anointed. All Renaissance is announced by the respect of differences, by their cult. Mediocrity remains silent, helpless; its hostility turns feeble and hollow. If it had a voice it would debase merit itself to ground level. From the useful to everyone, they do not know how to decide for most. The routine man has never been judged of being an idealist, nor the ignorant of being wise, nor the dishonest of virtuoso nor the servile of decent men. All

excellence finds judge in itself. The merit of each one grows in the opinion of their peers.

There is a natural aristocracy when the effort of the most suitable minds converges to guide the common destiny of a nation. Is not a prerogative of the sharpest wits, as some would like, in whose ears it resonates like an echo that "intellectual aristocracy" which was Renan's chimera. In the aristocracy of merit, the credit goes as much to virtue and character as to intelligence; else it would be incomplete and its effort ineffective.

A regime where individual merit was estimated over all else would be perfect. It would exclude any numerical or oligarchical influence. There would be no vested interests. The anonymous vote would have such low value as the fortuitous blazon. Men would strive to become increasingly original and different to each other, preferring any creative authenticity to the most traditional of routines. It would be possible natural selection and the merits of each would benefit the entire society. The gratitude of the least useful would encourage the ones favored by nature. Shadows would respect men. Privilege would be measured by the effectiveness of the aptitudes and would be lost with them.

The credo that in politics could suggest idealism founded on experience is therefore transparent. It is opposed to the quantitative democracy that seeks justice in equality: affirming privilege in favor of merit. Opposed also to the oligarchic aristocracy, that lays down privilege in the vested interests: affirming merit as the natural basis of privilege. The aristocracy of merit is the ideal regime, against the two mediocracies clouding History. It has the absolute formula: "Justice in inequality."

CHAPTER VIII

THE FORGERS OF IDEALS

I. CLIMATE OF GENIUS

Inequality is the strength and essence of all selection. There are not two equal lilies, or two eagles, or two caterpillars nor two men: all living creatures are constantly uneven. Some trees bloom each spring before others, as if they were preferred by Nature that smiles at that fecundating sun; at certain stages of human history, when a Nation take shape, style is created or a doctrine is formulated some exceptional men anticipate their vision to the rest and specify it in an ideal, expressing it so that it lingers for centuries.

Heralds! Humanity listens; believes them Prophets; follows their commands of captains; mimics their Sainthood. They fill an era or a herald a road; sowing some fruitful seed of new truths, putting their signature in destinies of races, creating harmonies, forging beauties.

Geniality is a coincidence. It emerges as a bright spark of the most excellent skills of a man and the social need to apply them to the performance of a transcendental mission. The extraordinary man only climbs to genius if he finds a favorable climate: the best seed needs the most fertile land. The function demands the organ: Genius realizes what in his climate is potential.

No philosopher, statesman, scholar or poet reaches geniality while in their midst feel exotic or inopportune; they require favorable conditions of time and place for their ability to become a function and mark an epoch in History. The environment is the "climate" of genius and opportunity marks his “hour”. Without them, no exceptional brain can rise to genius; but the one and the other are not enough to create it.

Many excellent talents are born in every century. One in hundred meets such climate and such a time that fatally destines him/her to culmination as if the good seed fell on fertile ground and on the eve of rain. That is the secret of his glory: matching the opportunity he needs to bloom.

Half opens and grows, synthesizing an Ideal implicit in the imminent or distant future: foreboding it, imposing it.

The work of geniuses is not the exclusive result of individual inspiration, nor can you look at it like a happy accident that turns the course of history; to that achievement converge personal skills and endless circumstances. When a race, an art, a science or creed prepare their advent or undergo a fundamental renewal, the extraordinary man appears, personifying new orientations of peoples, nations or ideas. Announcing them as an artist or prophet, unraveling them as inventor or philosopher, undertaking them as a conqueror or statesman. Their works survive and allow us to recognize their mark through time. It is straight and incontrovertible: flies and flies, above all obstacles to reach genius. Arriving at the wrong time that man would live restless, mournful, disoriented; would always inherently be a wit, and could display full talent if he could accommodate to some of his adventitious vocations, but would not be a genius, while that name did not correspond to him for the work done. It could not be since it is missing the opportunity in his environment.

To grant that title to those who stand out by certain skill means to find identical all who rise above the mean; it is as inaccurate as calling idiots all inferior men. Genius and idiot are the extreme terms of an infinite scale. Some anthropologists' conclusions and statistics appear to have forgotten this and move to laughter. Let's reserve the title to a chosen few. They are animators of a time, sometimes transfused in their generation and more often in successive ones who become legitimate heirs of his ideas or his impulse.

Adulation lavishes at full hands the rank of genius to the powerful; there are imbeciles that give it to themselves. There is, however, a way to appreciate geniality: if it is legitimate, is recognized by his work, deep in its roots and vast in bloom. If poet, sings an ideal; if wise, defines it; if holy, teaches; if hero, executes it.

The most conspicuous aptitudes to reach geniality in a young man can be guessed; but it is difficult to predict whether the circumstances will converge for them to become works and accomplishments. And while we do not see them, any assessment is fickle. Therefore, and because certain great works are not performed in minutes, but in years, a man of genius can

be unknown in his time and be enshrined by posterity. The contemporaries do not use to walk to the compass and rhythm of the genius; but if he has fulfilled his destiny, a new generation will be enabled to understand him.

In life, many men of genius are ignored, outlawed, dismissed, belittled or flouted. In the struggle for success the mediocre man can succeed, because they better adapt to the prevailing ideological fashion; only the works inspired by an ideal and consolidated by time count for glory, where geniuses succeed. Their victory does not depend on the temporary tribute that others can grant or deny, but on their own ability to fulfill their mission. They last in spite of all. Despite Socrates drinking hemlock, Christ dying on the cross or Bruno agonizing at the stake: they were the vital organs of necessary functions in the history of nations or doctrines. And the genius is known by the remote effectiveness of his effort or his example, rather than by their contemporaries' fragile sanctions.

The magnitude of the brilliant work is calculated by the vastness of his horizon and extent of their applications. Certain hierarchy of the various orders of genius has been considered, estimating them as extraordinary developments of the intellect and will. No classification is fair. Varying weather and time can change the appearance of either order of geniality, according to the social function that triggers it; the most timely is always the most fruitful. It is more convenient to renounce all hierarchical stratification of geniuses, affirming their difference and admiring them alike: Beyond a certain level, all summits are too much. Nobody, if they were not themselves, might think enabled to decree ranks and slopes. They are neglectful of these trifles; the problem is insoluble by definition.

No hierarchy nor species: geniality is not classified. The man that reaches it is the standard bearer of an ideal. It is always definite: it is a milestone in the evolution of his people or his art. The common stories are usually chronicles of captains and conquerors; the other forms of geniality enter them as mere accidents. And it is not fair. Homer, Michelangelo, Cervantes and Goethe lived in their times higher than emperors; each one of them marked the greatness of his time. They marked memorable dates, personifying immanent aspirations of their intellectual climate. The wing blow is as necessary to feel or think a creed as to preach it or to execute it: every Ideal is a synthesis. The great historical transmutations are born as lyrical clairvoyance of artistic geniuses, are transfused in the doctrine of

thinkers and are realized by the efforts made by the statesmen; geniality becomes function in nations and flowers in irremovable circumstances, fatality at work.

The genius' exegesis would be enigmatic if limited to study the biology of great men. This only reveals some springs their ability and not always obvious. Some research their ancestors, tracing them back if they can over the centuries, through many generations until they collect a handful of lunatics and degenerates as if in the conjunction of the seven deadly sins a spark could ignite the Ideal of an era. That is to convert trickery in doctrine, give overtones of science to fallacious sophistry. We will not see in them simple products of the environment, forgetting their unique attributes. Neither one, nor the other. If such a man is born in such a climate and arrives at such an appropriate time, his preexisting and native fitness, appropriate to both, unfolds to reach geniality.

Genius is a force that acts depending on its environment. To probe it is easy. Twice death and glory shook hands on an Argentine corpse. It was the first when Sarmiento went out in the horizon of the continental culture; the second, when the deepest wells of Argentine science were blinded in Ameghino. Few graves, like theirs, have seen the cypress and laurel flourish and intertwine at the same time, as if in the twilight of their lives votive lamps had been lit devoted to the eternal glorification of their genius.

They deserve such a name; they fulfilled a social function, performing decisive and fruitful work. No one may think of Education or the Culture of this continent without mentioning the name of Sarmiento, its apostle and sower; nor there was a mind that that could be compared to his, among those who followed in Government and Education. Ameghino's conceptions in the development of evolutionary doctrines mark a milestone. It will be impossible not to notice the imprint of his footsteps and those who forget to renounce to learn many domains of science explored by him.

Sarmiento was the pragmatic genius. Ameghino was the revealing genius.

II- SARMIENTO

His thoughts were gashes of light in the darkness of the Latin American barbarism, opening the vision of things to come. He thought in such a high style that seemed to have, like Socrates, a familiar demon that "hallucinated" his inspiration. Cyclops in his task, he was obsessed by the desire to educate; that idea in his mind gravitated as large incandescent moles in the celestial balance, subordinating to his influence all the smaller masses of his cosmic system.

He had the Ideal's clairvoyance and had chosen his means: Organize civilizing, elevate educating. All sources were scarce to quench his thirst for knowledge; all grudges were meager to quell his concern for teaching. Erect and always virile, standard-bearer of his own ideals, he followed the routes where the destiny guided him, foreseeing that the glory is incubated in auroras fertilized by dreams of those who look further. America was waiting. When it is urgent to build or transmute, the climate of genius is formed; his time sounds like a fateful invitation to fill a page of light. The extraordinary man is revealed like an aurora, as if obeying an irrevocable predestination.

Facundo is the clamor of modern culture against the feudal twilight. To create a just doctrine it to win a battle for truth; it is more difficult to sense a pace of civilization than to undertake a conquest. A book is more than an intention: it is a gesture. All Ideals can be served with a prophetic word. Sarmiento's word seems to descend off Sinai. Outlawed in Chile, the extraordinary man frames his spirit between the mute cordillera and the roaring sea.

Groans and moans of people reach his ears and swell of anguish his heart: Seems to overshadow the taciturn sky of his forehead, made uncomfortable by a flash of prophecies. Passion ignites the Dantesque burners in which he forges his pages and they reverberate with Plutonian sonority in all corners of his homeland. To measure himself, he seeks the greatest enemy, Rosas, who was also great in the barbarity of his environment and time: for this reason there are apocalyptic rhythms in Facundo's apostrophes, amazing Enchiridion that seems an eagle's challenge, released over some of the most conspicuous peaks in the world.

His word is anathema: So strong is the cry that at times, the prose becomes hoarse. The vehemence creates his style as so much his that being

Castilian does not seem Spanish. He shakes a full continent with the simple power of his pen, enhanced by the sanctification of danger and exile. When an ideal is reflected in a high spirit, few drops of ink are enough to fix and emblazon it in decisive pages; and they, as if every line carried a devastating fire spark reaching the heart of thousands of men, changing their routines and igniting passions, polarize their aptitudes towards a nascent dream. The prose of the visionary lives: beats, strikes, moves, collapses, annihilates. In his sentences it could be said that the soul of an entire nation is overturned, like an avalanche. A book, fruit of imperceptible genius' cerebral vibrations, becomes so decisive for the civilization of a race as the tumultuous irruption of infinite armies.

And his word is judgment: an era of barbarism is mortally wounded, symbolized by a proper name. The genius, thus, soars to speak, interpreter of History. His words do not accept rectifications and are beyond criticism. Poets should ask their rhythms to the ocean tides to lyrically laud the staying power of the magnificent gesture: Facundo!

First he spoke, and later did…

Politics tested his strength: great time was that in which his Ideal became action.

He presided over the Republic against the intention of all: work of a beneficial fairy. He lived up struggling as much as below, always the aggressor and also assaulted. He was serving a historical function. Therefore, as the romance's hero, his work was the struggle, fighting his rest. He remained outside and above all parties, unable to contain him. They all claimed him and repudiated him alternatively: none, big or small, could be a generation, a whole people, a whole race, and Sarmiento summed up an era in our "Latin-Americanism". His approach to the factions, composed of amalgams of subalterns, had reservations and reticence; simple tries towards a clearly intended purpose, for whose achievement he need to use all means. Genius executor, the world seemed to him too small to embrace by his arms; It could only be his the unmistakable motto: "Things have to be done; bad, but do them."

No company seemed unworthy of his effort; in all he took as the only torch his Ideal. He would rather have died of thirst than drown in the spring of routine. Like Michelangelo, sculpting a new civilization, he had always

free hands to shape institutions and ideas, free of cliques and parties, free to strike tyrannies, to applaud virtues, to sow handfuls of truths. An enthusiast for his Nation, whose greatness he observed like that of his own daughter, was also ruthless with its vices, cauterizing them with the beneficent cruelty of a surgeon.

The unity of his work is deep and absolute, notwithstanding the multiple contradictions born by the contrast of his conduct with the circumstantial swings of his midst. Between extreme alternatives, Sarmiento retained the line of his character till his death. His maturity followed the guidance of his youth; he arrived at his eighties perfecting the originalities that he had acquired at his thirties. He was wrong countless times, as it can only be conceived in a man who lived always thinking. He changed his mind a thousand times in the details because he never stopped living; but he never took his pupils off what was essential. His wild and divine spirit twinkled like a lighthouse, with perturbing alternatives. It was a world that darkened and was lighted without rest: incessant succession of sunrises and twilights cast in the uniform whole of Time. In certain times seemed born again with every dawn; but knew how to oscillate to infinity without ever ceasing to be the same. He always looked to the future, as if the past had died behind him; for him, yesterday, facing tomorrow did not exist. The men and nations in decadence live remembering where they come from; the geniuses and strong Nations just need to know where they are going. He lived inventing doctrines or forging institutions, always creating, in continuous splurge of creative imagination. Never had resigning patience or that imitative meekness of those who accommodate to the circumstances to vegetate quietly. Adaptation fosters mediocrity. It debases individuals to modes of thinking and feeling which are common to the masses, erasing their personal traits. Few men, at the end of their lives, get rid of it; most usually give up when the springs of the spirit feel the rust of old age. Sarmiento was an exception. He was born “Thus” and wanted to live as he was, without fading in the halftone of others.

At the age of seventy he had to be a standard bearer on the last civil war triggered by the colonial spirit against the affirmation of the Argentine ideals: with the School of the Pampas, scribbled by blows, the civilizing thought cycle started with Facundo closes. In those cruel hours, when fanatics and merchants were attacking him to destroy his ideals of secular

and scientific culture, in vain would Sarmiento tried to rebel against his fate. An inconvertible fate had elected him to be the spokesman of his time, harassing him relentlessly to persevere to the edge of his grave. And in the midst of his advanced age, he continued thinking for himself, always alert to pounce against those who fleeced the wings of his great dreams: he would have dared dismantle the most glorious grave if he had glimpsed the hope that something would rise from the ashes.

There were gestures of captive eagle in Sarmiento's imbalances. He was "out of date" in his environment; genius always anticipates. His originality seemed to verge on madness. There was in him certainly an imbalance: but it was not intrinsic to his personality, but extrinsic, between him and his environment. His restlessness was not fickleness, his labor was not agitation. His genius was supreme sanity in everything related to his ideals; it seemed otherwise in contrast with the fog of mediocrity surrounding him.

He had the dissipation that modern life hurls to all military characters; but the most undeniable revelation of his genius is in the effectiveness of his work, despite the apparent disequilibrium. He epitomized the biggest struggle between the continent's past and future, assuming with excess the responsibility of its destiny. The enemies of the Ideal he represented spared nothing and his supporters demanded it all. The best possible balance in the common man is meager compared to the one the genius needs: The former does the work for one while the genius undertakes the equivalent to a thousand. To accomplish this, he needs exceptional firmness and absolute executive precision. Where others get altitude sickness, geniuses climb; become stronger when the storms pound; they seem gliding eagles in their natural environment.

The misunderstanding of these details frequently in history has attributed the genius of such men to insanity, thus materializing the hypothesis of its kinship with madness, comfortable to apply it to those who rise above the common processes of routine reasoning and domestic activity. But we forget that misfit does not mean alienated; genius could not be adaptation to mediocrity.

The cult of the accommodative and conventional men, while flattering for the insignificant subjects, implies presenting the great creators as

predestined to rule the generation or to the madhouse. It is false that talent and genius populate asylums; if mad, for perhaps ten excellent men, a million vulgar spirits are found beside them: The Alienists will study the biography of those ten and ignore the million. And to enrich their catalogs of sick geniuses they will include in their lists ingenious men, if not simple intellectually imbalanced men that are "morons with the geniuses' livery".

Men like Sarmiento can heat up by the excessive work they carry out; the ignorant confuse their passion with madness. But judged in the evolution of races and social groups, they culminate as cases of active perfecting for the benefit of civilization and human species. Human evolution only progresses by the originals. The development of a great personality implies a variation on the characters acquired by the group; it incubates new and different energies, which are the beginning of divergent lines, forces of natural selection. Sarmiento's disharmony is progress; their disagreements are rebellions to routines, prejudices to domesticities.

Madness always involves disruption, imbalance and continuity solution; with brief reasoning, Bovio refuted the celebrated sophism. The genius abstracts himself; the alienated is distracted. Abstraction absents from others, distraction absents from oneself. Each thought process is a series; in each series there is a happy medium and a logical process; among the various series there are jumps and the middle terms are missing. The genius, moving straight and fast within the same series, abbreviates the middle terms and discovers the distant reaction; the madman, jumping from one series to another, deprived of middle terms, disparages instead of reasoning. That is the apparent analogy between genius and madness; it seems that in the movement of both there are missing middle terms; but, strictly speaking, the genius flies, the madman jumps. The one understands many middle terms and the other does not see any. In the genius, the spirit is absent from the rest; in madness, it absents from itself. "The sublime madness of the genius is thus relative to the common people; in front of the genius, the populace is not sane nor crazy: is simply mediocre, that is, half logic, half soul, half character, conventional religiosity, accommodating morality, small politicking, the usual language, nullity of style".

The ingenuity of the ignorants has a decisive part in the confusion. They easily welcome the laziness of the envious and proclaim mad the best men of their time. Some are spared this label: those whose genius is

debatable, granting them just some special talent in sublime degree. Not so the unquestionably superior, who live in perpetual struggle, as Sarmiento. When he began to age, his own adversaries learned to tolerate him, although without the magnanimous gesture of a grateful admiration. They kept calling "the crazy Sarmiento".

The crazy Sarmiento! These words teach more than one hundred books about the fragility of social judgment. We should be wary of the diagnosis formulated by contemporaries about men who don't march at the pace of the common ranks; mediocrities, surprised by unusual radiance and glow, just try to justify themselves in front of them, resorting to disparaging epithets. It is better to confess that great fault: No other illustrious Latin American suffered more taunts from his fellow citizens. There is no libelous word that has not been used against him, but He was so great that the entire dictionary was not enough to defame him before posterity. The retorts of envy distilled the finest quintessence; He got to know all the obliquity of the crafty and all the sidelong glances of the powerless. Caricature bit him until he bled, as to no other: the pen had, back to back, firmness of stiletto and nuances of poison. Like the snakes strangling Laocoon in Beldevere's masterwork, a thousand anonymous tentacles hounded his titanic personality, strengthened by the struggle.

The vulgar spirits ceded to Sarmiento everywhere, with the force of numbers, irresponsible to the future. And he marched without counting his enemies, overflowing and hostile, inebriated from battling in a gravid atmosphere of storms, spreading seeds to all winds, every hour, in every furrow. He disdained the nickname of those who did not understand him; clairvoyance of posthumous judgment was the only lenitive to the wounds that his contemporaries lavished on him. His life was a perpetual flowering of hope in a thicket of thorns.

To keep intact their attributes, the genius needs periods of recollection; prolonged contact with mediocrity blunts the original ideas and corrodes the most adamantine characters. As a result, often, all superiority is an exile. The great thinkers frequently become loners; they appear outcasts in their own environment. They mix with it to fight or preach, somewhat eccentric when not hostile, never giving themselves up totally to rulers or crowds. Many eminent wits overwhelmed by the collective tide, lose or attenuate their originality, tarnished by the

suggestion of the environment; the prejudices, more rooted in the individual, survive and thrive; the new ideas, being personal acquisitions of recent formation, shrivel and whittle. To defend his most tender fronds the genius seeks partial insulation in their own hothouses. If he does not want to level himself too much, he needs, from time to time, to look inside and this defense of his originality does not amount to misanthropy. He carries within the palpitations of an era or generation, who are his purpose and strength: when removed he soars. From his summit, he formulates with firm clarity that feeling, doctrine or hope that is dully incubated in all. In him, the confusing rumors that meander in the sub-conscience of his contemporaries become clear. Perhaps more than any other genius of History, Sarmiento embodied the concept of civilization of his people, at a time that heralded the emergence of new nations from the chaos of barbarity. To think better, Sarmiento lived alone among many. Expatriated, proscribed within his nation, European among Argentines and a foreigner abroad, provincial in the capital and from the capital in the hinterland. Leonardo said it is the fate and destiny of men of genius to be absent everywhere.

They live higher and beyond the common whirlpool, mystifying their contemporaries. They are restless: glory and rest have never been compatible. They are passionate: they dissipate the fog like the first sun rays, their strength, they learn. And they keep after their Ideal, afflicting some, pitying others, ahead of all without surrendering, stubborn as if the old motto were theirs: only the one who concedes is defeated. There lies their genius. That is the divine madness that Erasmus praised in imperishable pages and that mediocrity reproached in that great man that honors an entire continent. Sarmiento seemed to grow under the blades of the axes.

III- AMEGHINO

His pupil was able to see at night, before everyone’s dawn. He revealed knowledge and created: it was his mission. Just as Sarmiento, Ameghino arrived in his climate and at a time. By serendipity, both were schoolteachers, self - taught, without a college degree, formed outside the metropolitan capitals, in immediate contact with nature, alien to all stirring of worldly lies, with free hands, free head, free heart, free wings. It could be

said that genius flourishes best in the lonely regions, caressed by storms, which are his own environment; withering in the State hothouses, in their domesticated universities, in their well rented laboratories, in their fossilized academies and their hierarchical operation. There missing the free air and the full light that only nature gives: early sewing rusts the springs of creative imagination and blunts the best originalities. Genius has never been an official institution.

The vast work of Ameghino, in our continent and our time, has the character of a natural phenomenon. Why a man, in Lujan, starts picking up fossil bones and shuffles them among his fingers like playing cards made with thousands of centuries, and eventually asks silent witnesses the history of the earth, of life, of humanity, as if he were acting by predestination or fate?

It had to be an Argentine genius, because no other point on Earth's surface contains a fossil fauna comparable to ours; It had to be in our century, because he would have missed the Evolutionist's doctrines underpinning his observations; It could not have been before, because the intellectual climate of the country was not conducive until it was fertilized by Sarmiento's apostolate and had to be Ameghino, and no other man of his time. No other possessed such aptitude for observation and hypothesis formulation, endurance for enormous effort over so many years, his disinterest for all the vanities that make man function but destroy the thinker.

No convergence of routines stops the genius in his opportunity. Although they are all-powerful forces that act continuously and silently, the genius dominates them: sooner or later, but in dominating them lays the realization of his work. Resistances, which discourage the mediocre man, are his encouragement; he grows in the shade of others' envy. Society can conspire against him, accumulating against them detraction and silence. They continue to wend their way, fight without falling, without straying, dionisiacallycertain. Genius, by definition, never fails. The one who has failed is not genius, did not come to be, it was a dissipated illusion. This does not mean that they live off success, but that their march towards Glory is relentless, despite all contrasts. The one who stops, tests inability to march forward. Sometimes the great man hesitates and wonders anxiously about his own destiny: when the envious bite their heel or when the

hypocrites flatter them. But in two circumstances light up or launch forward: at the time of inspiration and at the time of diatribe. When he discovers a truth it seems that his eyes shine an eternal light; when admonishes the debased it would seem that glistens on his forehead the sovereignty of a generation.

Ameghino required a firm and serene will to fulfill great work. Nobody creates worthy or lasting things unknowingly and unwillingly. The imagination is not enough to give life to one's work: will is required. In this sense-and in no other- the development of the native attitude requires "a long patience" for wit to become talent or for genius to reach the summit. For this reason, the exceptional men have a moral value and are more than mere objects of curiosity: they "deserve" the admiration that they are professed. If their fitness is a gift of nature, to develop it involves an extraordinary effort. Even if their seeds are instinctual and unconscious, the work is never done by itself. Time is an ally of genius; work completes the initiatives of Inspiration. Those who have felt the effort to create know the difficulty. Certain Ideal has to be realized: in a race, in law, in marble, in books. The magnitude of the task explains why, there being so many wits and great people, the number of masterpieces is so scarce. If creative imagination is necessary to conceive them, another rare virtue is required to execute them: tenacious virtue which Newton christened as simple patience, without measuring the absurd corollaries of his aphorism.

We will not say, then, that imagination is superfluous and secondary, attributing genius to what was oxen's virtue in mythological symbolism. No. Without extraordinary skills, patience does not produce an Ameghino. A fool, in fifty years of perseverance, only will achieve to fossilize his imbecility. The man of genius, in flash, defines his ideal; then, all his life runs chasing after that chimera.

Essential skills are native and spontaneous; they were revealed in Ameghino by precocity of "genius" prior to all experience. That does not mean that every precocious child can reach geniality or talent. Many are unbalanced and often become exhausted the middle of the spring; few perfect their skills to turn them into talent; and rarely coincide with the auspicious hour and rise to genius. Only genius converts them in shining work, with that superior fecundity that involves some maturity; the most beautiful gifts need to be cultivated, like the most fertile land needs to be

plowed. Barren are the bright spirits who disdain every effort, so absolutely sterile as the laborious fools; the fertile fields do not provide harvests without work nor is provided by the sterile fields despite significant work.

That is the profound moral sense of the paradox that identifies the genius with patience, even if their absurd corollaries are inadmissible. The same original meaning of the word genius presupposes something like a transcendental inspiration. Everything that smells of weariness, without being fatigue, is the antithesis of genius. The supreme honor of such title can only be granted to those whose works denounce less the scribe's effort than a sort of special free and unforeseen gift, which operates without his knowledge, or at least with a force and a result that exceed his intentions or fatigue. For Greeks and Latins, "genius" meant "domain"; was that spirit that accompanies, guides or inspires every man from the cradle to grave. Socrates was the most famous. With the sense that is universally given today to the word "genius" the ancients had none: to express it they put in front of the noun "ingenious" an adjective able to express his greatness or culmination.

It is not lawful to call geniuses all superior men. There are middlemen types. Modernity distinguishes man of genius from man of talent, but forgets the initial fitness of both: "wit", i.e., a higher than average capacity. It has an infinite gradation, and each of its degrees is susceptible to unlimited education. That capacity remains sterile and disorganized in most, without implying even talent. The latter is a perfection achieved by few, a particular originality, a synthesis of coordination, outstanding and exalted, without being equivalent to genius. Rarely the utmost intensification of wit creates, presages, makes or invents; only then it acquires social significance and amounts to genius, as in the case of Ameghino. The species, to be meager, represents infinite varieties: many, almost, as exemplary.

There would be lightness of method and doctrine if unable to distinguish between the superior minds, about to be classified as geniuses many men of talent and even certain imbalanced wits, which are their caricature. Nordau tested a discrete differentiation of types. He calls genius a man who creates new forms of activity not undertaken before by others or develops a wholly own and personal way to carry out familiar activities and calls talent those who practice forms of activity, generally or frequently practiced by other, better than most of those who cultivate those same skills.

This differential judgment is discreet, as it takes into account the realized work and the ability of the operator. The man of genius implies an organic development primitively superior; the man of talent acquires through the exercise of an integral excellence of some disposition possessed by most normal subjects. Between intelligence and talent there is only a quantitative difference, which is qualitative between talent and genius?

Not so, though it may seem. Talent involves, in some sense, some truly superior initial fitness, which education carries forward culminating in its own genre. Among these great minds, some will reach geniality as determined by extrinsic circumstances: his work will reveal whether they had critical roles in the life or culture of his people.

Genius and talent contribute alike to human progress. Their works integrate and they complement each other as the propeller and rudder: talent parts the restless waves steadily and genius marks the course towards unforeseen horizons.

Ameghino's work is creative: that is what characterizes it. An immense paleontological wildlife remained in mystery before he revealed it to modern science and formulated a general theory to explain their migrations in remote centuries. To create is to invent, as Voltaire expressed. The genius reveals itself by an inventive or creative ability applied to vast or difficult tasks. In social life, in sciences, in the arts, in virtues, in everything, it is manifested with bold anticipations, with a spontaneous ease to overcome obstacles between things and ideas, with the certainty to not deviate of the way. In some cases, the genius discovers the new; in others, he draws near the remote and perceives relationships between distant things, as defined by Ampere. It is not simply about inventing or discovering: the inventions that occur by chance, without being expressly intended, do not require great skills. The genius discovers what escapes the reflection of centuries or generations, induces laws that express an unexpected relationship between things, points out concepts that serve as center to a thousand developments and opens roads in the endless exploration of nature.

What is it then? Is it divine breath? Is it demon? Is it disease? Never. It is simpler and more exceptional at the same time. Simpler, because it depends on a complicated structure of the brain and not on fantastic entities;

more exceptional because the world teems with sick people and rarely announces an Ameghino. The better is man's brain, the higher and more significant is his thinking function. The intimate mechanism of superior intellectual processes is ignored, undoubtedly accompanied by changes in nerve cells: changes in position and complex chemical permutations. To understand them we should know the molecular activities and their variable relationships, as well as an accurate and complete histology of the brain centers. This is not enough: They are enigmas of the nervous activity's nature, transformations of energy determined at birth, while the phenomena responsible for the very complex function of thinking take place. The scientific knowledge is far from that limit. However, while chemistry and physiology may at last allow approaching the truth. There already exist the certainty that these sciences, to explain the supreme skills of a genius as a function of their environment.

We are born different; there is a large scale from the idiot all the way to genius. One is born in an area of that spectrum, with skills subordinated to the structure and coordination of cells that intervene in the development of thought; heritage assists in giving a nervous system acute or obtuse, as appropriate. Education can refine those skills or abilities when they exist; it cannot create them when missing: Salamanca does not provide them.

Each one of us has a sensitivity corresponding to our perfecting of our nervous system; the senses are the basis of memory, of association, of imagination; of everything. It is hearing what makes the musician; the eye carries the painter's hand. The power to conceive is subordinated to the power to perceive. Memory does not make the genius, though it does not get on the way; but memory and reasoning its data, create nothing superior to the reality we perceive. The creative fecundity requires the assistance of the imagination, necessary element to superimpose an Ideal to reality. When, then, genius is defined as "an exquisite degree of nervous sensitivity", the most important of its conditions is set forth; but the definition is incomplete. Sensitivity is the complex instrument at the service of imaginative skills, although these, in the final analysis, have not been formed but as a result of information and data provided by the same the same sensitivity.

In the aesthetic genius the superintendence of imagination over the senses is evident: it is no less in the speculative geniuses as Ameghino, and

the pragmatic geniuses, as Sarmiento. Thanks to the imagination, problems are conceived, the solutions are anticipated, hypotheses are proposed, experiences are shared and those combinations multiply. There is imagination in Ameghino's paleontology, as there is in Ampere's physics and Laplace's cosmology. Also in Sarmiento's civilizing vision, as in Caesar's politics or Cardinal Richelieu's. All that bears the mark of genius is the work of the imagination, either one of Don Quixote's chapters or Franklin's lightning rod; let alone philosophical systems, so absolutely imaginative as artistic creations. Moreover, many are poems, and their value is usually measured by the imagination of their creators. Throughout his work and his teachings, the genius of Ameghino is manifested by an absolute unity and continuity of effort, which is the antithesis of madness. He, too, was called crazy, especially in his youth. With cheerful bonhomie he remembered the taunts of neighbors and school children, when they saw him head, hoe over his shoulder, toward the banks of the Luján; for those simple minds the teacher who spent whole days digging the earth and digging bones of strange animals had to be crazy, as if some delirium transformed him in gravedigger of extinct ages.

Changing environments without assimilating to any, he managed to pass unnoticed and mitigate his misfit reputation.

It is enough to read his immense creation - hundreds of monographs and volumes- to understand that he only presents the imbalances inherent to his exuberance. His discoveries, great and useful, were never guessed by chance or in the sub-conscience, but by a vast elaboration; they were not fruits of a brain riddled by inheritance or poisons, but highly trained gears; no occurrences, but previous planting crops; never coincidences, but clearly planned and announced.

Genius is high harmony; it needs to be. It is absurd to suppose them fallen under the common level the very people that the admiration of centuries placed above all. Great works can only be achieved by better brains; the process of creation, even if it may have unconscious phases, would be impossible without clairvoyance of its purpose. Before being improvised in leisure hours, they happen in a timely manner and after long meditations, arriving in time to serve as premise of starting point for new doctrines and corollaries. Never such a balance of great work will be more evident than in Ameghino's: if we were to judge by analyzing his work, the

genius or geniality would present to us as a tendency to a systematic equilibrium among parts of a new architectural style.

This does not exclude that degeneration and madness can coexist with creative imagination, affecting special domains of the human mind; but the ability for vast synthesis does not need to be imbalance or disease. No genius was such due to madness; some, like Rousseau, they were in spite of it; many as Nietzsche were submerged by the disease in the shadows. Ameghino, on par with all those who think long and intensely, contradicted himself often in the details, without ever losing the sense of his global orientation. When circumstances agree, the speculative genius is born straight from the beginning, like a ray of light that nothing twists or turns off. It's enough to hear him to recognize him: all his words concur to explain the same thought, through one hundred contradictions in the details and a thousand alternatives in the trajectory; they seem tries to be sure of the better road without breaking the coherence of the whole work; that harmony of synthesis that escapes the subaltern spirits. Ameghino converges to an end by all paths; nothing diverts him. He looks high and far, going straight, without the prudence that hinders the way to the mediocrities, without stopping at the thousand questions that beset him from everywhere to distract him from the Truth hidden behind the veils. The real contradiction, which sterilizes effort and thinking, lies in the disjointed heterogeneity that palls the works of mediocre men. They live with the nightmare of other people's judgment and speak with emphasis hoping that many will hear them but not understand them; in their brains nest all orthodoxies, not daring to yawn without a metronome. They contradict themselves, forced by circumstances: the routine men would be supreme luminaries if they were judged by simple incongruity. To point out the intersection between two theories, two faiths, two epochs or two generations, supreme balance is required. In the small contingencies of ordinary life, the common man can be more shrewd and skillful; but at the great hours of intellectual and social evolution all must be expected of genius. And only from him.

It would be absurd to say that geniality is infallible, absent imperfect truths; a hundred rectifications could be made to Ameghino's work, and especially to his hypothesis about the site origin of the human species. Geniuses can make mistakes. Frequently are wrong and they should make

mistakes. Their false creations are very useful for the corrections they trigger, the investigations they stimulate, the passions they light and the inertia they remove.

The mediocre men are wrong in a vulgar manner; geniuses, even when falling, they ignite a spark, and in their fleeting glow, something or an unsuspected truth is glimpsed which was unsuspected. Plato is not less great for his mistakes nor are Shakespeare or Kant. In the geniuses who make mistakes, there is a manly firmness that imposes respect to all. While the ambiguous contemporizing men do not trigger great admirations, firm men obligate the homage of their own adversaries. There is more moral courage in firmly believing our own illusion than in warmly accepting others' lie.

IV- THE MORAL OF GENIUS

Genius is excellent due to his morality, or he is not a genius. But his morality cannot be measured with the usual precepts of catechisms, no one would measure the height of the Himalayas with pocket tape-measure. The Genius's behavior is relentless about his ideals. If he seeks Truth, he sacrifices everything to her. If beauty, nothing diverts. If searching for the Good, he goes straight and certain over all temptations. And if he is a Universal, polyhedral genus, the true, the beautiful and the good are all unified in his exemplary ethics, which is a simultaneous worship by all excellences, all idealities. As it was in Leonardo and Goethe.

That's why it's rare. It excludes any inconsistency with respect to the ideal: morality for himself is the negation of genius. Through it we discover the unbalanced, the success junkies, the simulators. The genius ignores the social climbing arts and the industries of material prosperity. In science he seeks truth, such as conceived; that desire is enough to keep him alive. Never has the soul of public official. He endures, without selling his books to governments, without living off favors or privileges, ignoring the technique of false official geniuses who simulate merit to thrive in the shadow of the state. He lives as they are, searching for Truth and determined not to twist a thousandth off it. The one who can tame his convictions is not and cannot be, absolutely ever, a man of genius.

Nor is the one who conceives an Ideal but does not practice it. Without moral unity there is no genius. He who preaches the truth but

compromises with lies, who preaches justice but is not fair, who preaches piety and it is cruel, who preaches loyalty and betrays, who preaches patriotism and exploits it, who preaches character but is servile, who preaches dignity and drag himself, all who use duplicities, intrigues, humiliations, those thousand instruments incompatible with the vision of an ideal, that one is not a genius, is beyond holiness: his voice trails off without echo, does not reverberate in time, as if resonating in a vacuum.

The carrier of an ideal walks on straight roads, without realizing if they are harsh or abrupt. They never compromise moved by vile interest; they repudiate evil when conceiving Good; ignores duplication; loves the all his country-fellowmen and feels vibrate in his own soul that of all mankind; has sincerities that give chills to the hypocrites of his time and tells the truth in such personal style that can only be his word; tolerates in others honest mistakes, remembering his own; curling before baseness, pronouncing words that have rhythms of apocalypse and effectiveness of catapult; He believes in himself and in his ideals, without compromising with the prejudices and dogmas of the many that beset him with rage, from all sides. Such is the climactic morality of Genius. He cultivates in the highest degree the highest virtues, without worrying about hoeing in the magnificent jungle the weeds that concentrate the preoccupation of the vulgar spirits.

Geniuses widen their sensitivity in the proportion that they raise their intelligence; they can subordinate small feelings to the great ones, the closer ones to the remote, concrete ones to the abstracts. Then, narrow-minded men supposed them impassioned, apathetic and skeptical. And they are wrong. They feel being human more than all. The mediocre man limits his affective horizon to himself, his family, his clique, his faction; but cannot extend it to the Truth or Humanity, which can only excite the genius. Many men would give their lives to defend their sect. Men that have consciously immolated themselves for an ideal or a doctrine are rare.

Faith is the strength of genius. To magnetize an era needs to love his Ideal and transform it into passion; "Strike your heart that in it is your genius", wrote Stuart Mill, before Nietzsche. The intense culture does not cool off the visionaries: his whole life is faith in action. They know that the steepest roads lead higher. There is nothing they undertake that they are not determined to conclude.

The resistances are spells that encourage them to persevere; although dark clouds of skepticism may overshadow their sky, they are ultimately optimistic and believers: when they smile, one can easily guess the crackling ember under their irony. While the man without ideals gives up at the first skirmish, the genius conquers the obstacle, provokes and cultivates it as if he placed in it his pride and glory: with equal vehemence the flame engulfs the object that obstructs it, till igniting it to enlarge itself.

Faith is the antithesis of fanaticism. The Genius' firmness is a supreme dignity of his own Ideal; the lack of beliefs solidly cemented makes the mediocre man become a fanatic. The faith is confirmed in the clash with opposing views; fanaticism fears hesitation before them and tries to smother them. While their old beliefs agonize, Saul persecutes Christians viciously proportionate to his fanaticism; but when the new creed takes root in Paul, faith encourages him, infinite: teaches and does not persecute, preaches but does not gag and tie others. He dies for his faith, but does not kill; fanatic, he would have lived to kill. Faith is tolerant: respects the own beliefs in others. It is simple trust in an Ideal and the sufficiency of our own forces; the men of genius remain believers and firm in their doctrines, better than if they were dogmas or commandments. They remain free of vulgar superstitions and often combat them: for this reason fanatics supposed them incredulous, mistaking their horror to the common lie with lack of enthusiasm for the Ideal itself. All revealed religions can remain alien to the faith of the virtuous man. Nothing is more foreign to faith that fanaticism. Faith belongs to visionaries and fanaticism to lackeys. Faith is lighting faith while fanaticism is ash that extinguishes. Faith is a dignity and fanaticism is a renunciation. Faith is an individual statement of a personal truth and fanaticism is a conspiracy to stifle the truth held by others.

Faced with the domestication of character which lowers the moral level of contemporary societies, all tribute to men of genius who impended their lives for freedom and Science, is an act of faith in their Future: only in them we can appreciate moral examples that contribute to the improvement of humanity. When some generation feels a glut of flatness, falseness, servilism, it has to look in the geniuses of his time the symbols of thought and action that may temper that generation for new efforts.

Every man of genius is the ultimate personification of an ideal. Against the mediocrity that surrounds the original spirits, it is best to

promote their cult; it strengthens the nascent wings. The highest destinations are tempered in the forge of admiration. To place one's faith in a dream, passionately, with deepest emotion is to go up to the summits where glory flutters. Teaching to admire the genius, the holiness and heroism, we prepare propitious climates to their arrival.

The idols of one hundred fanaticisms have died in the course of the centuries, and it is necessary for others to die, implacably mowed by time. There is something human, more durable than the phantasmagoric superstition of the divine: the example of the high virtues. The saints of the idealist morals do not perform miracles: they perform great works, conceived supreme beauties. Investigate deeper truths. While there are hearts that encourage a desire for perfection, they will be moved by all that reveals faith in an Ideal: by singing poets, by the gesture of heroes, by the virtue of saints, for the doctrine of the wise and by the philosophy of thinkers.

José Ingenieros (April 24, 1877 – October 31, 1925) Argentine physician, journalist, writer, positivist philosopher and essayist.